



# Scarlet Street®

The Magazine of Mystery and Horror

No. 29/\$6.95 U.S./\$8.95 Can./Int.

**IN THIS ISSUE . . .**

**LAWRENCE TIERNEY**

**AUDREY TOTTER**

**ROBERT WISE**

**FILM NOIR CLASSICS**

**ROSS MACDONALD**

**AND MORE TALES  
OF THE CITY**

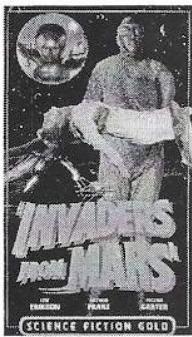
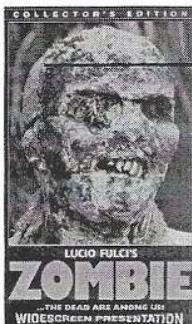
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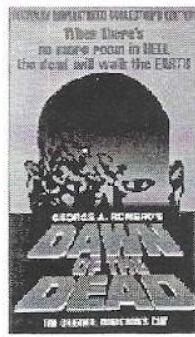
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COVER: GILDA (1946) and REAR WINDOW (1954)

# Scarlet Letters

The Gloria Stuart interview in *Scarlet Street* #28 is a lovely tribute to a gracious lady. Recently I read that when Ms. Stuart was a guest on the *TONIGHT SHOW* with Jay Leno, he announced the showing of a clip featuring her with Shirley Temple in *POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL*—but, when the clip appeared, it was Alice Faye and not Gloria Stuart. This shameful incident points up the increasing sloppiness of television producers in dealing with classic movies and their stars, even on channels like AMC and the Arts & Entertainment Network with its *BIOGRAPHY* series.

On AMC, I have repeatedly heard Bob Dorian and others make inaccurate statements, and I have seen well-known actors—for example, Dan Duryea—incorrectly identified in promotional trailers made by the network for the showing of their films.

In a recent *BIOGRAPHY* of Cary Grant, reference is made to a film in which he appeared in England in the mid-thirties, but the title is not given. A quick flash of an old American lobby card is supposed to identify it as *AMAZING ADVENTURE*. In fact, the film was called *THE AMAZING QUEST OF ERNEST BLISS* (from a novel of the same name by E. Phillips Oppenheim), although it was released in the USA by Grand National as *ROMANCE AND RICHES*. More than a decade later, an obscure independent distributor reissued it, disguised as *AMAZING ADVENTURE*. Its leading lady, Mary Brian, was interviewed on the program but not asked to talk about it.

Many television viewers are probably puzzled as to why film clips from classic movies often derive from poor-quality theatrical trailers with their limited choice of scenes. The reason is that such trailers are deemed to be public domain and can therefore be used without paying license fees. Most producers nevertheless consider this to be a violation of their copyrights, but neither the major studios nor the MPAA have chosen to pursue the issue.

Another great *SS* #28 article is Tom Johnson's piece on the films of Robert Baker and Monty Berman, which have been unjustly ignored by the Hammer aficionados. Also, I greatly enjoyed Bruce Hallenbeck's interview with Adrienne Corri, although they both make some minor mistakes. Mr. Hallenbeck says that Yvonne Romain was billed as Yvonne Green in my film *CORRIDORS OF BLOOD*. He is confusing her with Nigel Green, the actor who played the Scotland Yard detective. Yvonne used the name Yvonne Warren at the time. When I

costarred her with Bryant Haliday in *DEVIL DOLL* some years later, she had become Yvonne Romain.

Adrienne recollects that when Christopher Lee comes to a bad end in *CORRIDORS OF BLOOD*, his face is "slammed onto a grate." Actually a bottle of acid is flung in his face, propelled by Boris Karloff in self-defense!

I was sorry to read that Adrienne has such unhappy memories of working with Skip Martin, the dwarf who appeared with her in *VAMPIRE CIRCUS* and *THE HELLFIRE CLUB*. In fact, he also played a bit part in *CORRIDORS OF BLOOD*. Skip was a great little guy and I loved him dearly when he played an important role in my film *HORROR HOSPITAL*. I want to set the record straight that he was a consummate professional, even if he did sometimes upstage his costars. (What actor doesn't, if he can get away with it?) He was warm-hearted, a very funny man off camera, and all of us on the production enjoyed his presence immensely.

I must admit that I can't share Drew Sullivan's admiration for the screen's newest Tarzan, even if he makes a great



pinup for the nineties. *TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY* is a Harry Alan Towers clone which is so bad that no one could shine in it, but Casper Van Dien is a particularly unfortunate choice. Small in stature, lacking a powerful physique, and with a very small voice, he quite obviously had to resort to doubles and special effects to accomplish his stunts and he plays Tarzan in the same robotic style of his role in *STARSHIP TROOPERS*. I hope this is not the beginning of a new cycle of Tab Hunter-like heroes. Of course, when we see Disney's forthcoming animated Tarzan feature, we may have to reconsider and thank *TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY* for small blessings.

Richard Gordon  
Gordon Films, Inc.  
New York, NY

Drew Sullivan replies: Golly, Casper looked much taller in the pinups, but after seeing the film I can understand how he was threatened by a baby elephant.

I enjoyed Dave Bowman's fine article on Warner Oland in *Scarlet Street* #28. Unfortunately, the piece contained a little misinformation regarding the unfinished Chan film *CHARLIE CHAN AT THE RINGSIDE*, which perhaps I can help clear up.

Mr. Bowman writes: "Shortly after Mr. Oland's death, *CHARLIE CHAN AT THE RINGSIDE* was rewritten as *MR. MOTO'S GAMBLE*." In fact, *MR. MOTO'S GAMBLE* was released on March 25, 1938, a good five months before Oland's death. The Moto switch-over occurred mere weeks after suspension of *CHARLIE CHAN AT THE RINGSIDE*, with much material from the five days of shooting incorporated into the Moto flick. Before Oland went to Europe, he signed a contract for an additional three Chan pictures. It was the first of these pictures that Oland looked forward to doing in September.

There is a subtle tribute to Oland in *MR. MOTO'S LAST WARNING*, which was being filmed in August 1938. At one point, a billboard is seen for a Charlie Chan picture starring Warner Oland. Over this notice is a smaller banner, reading "last day." I go a great deal into these films in my "Guide to Mr. Moto Films" in the April issue of *Classic Images*, and my earlier

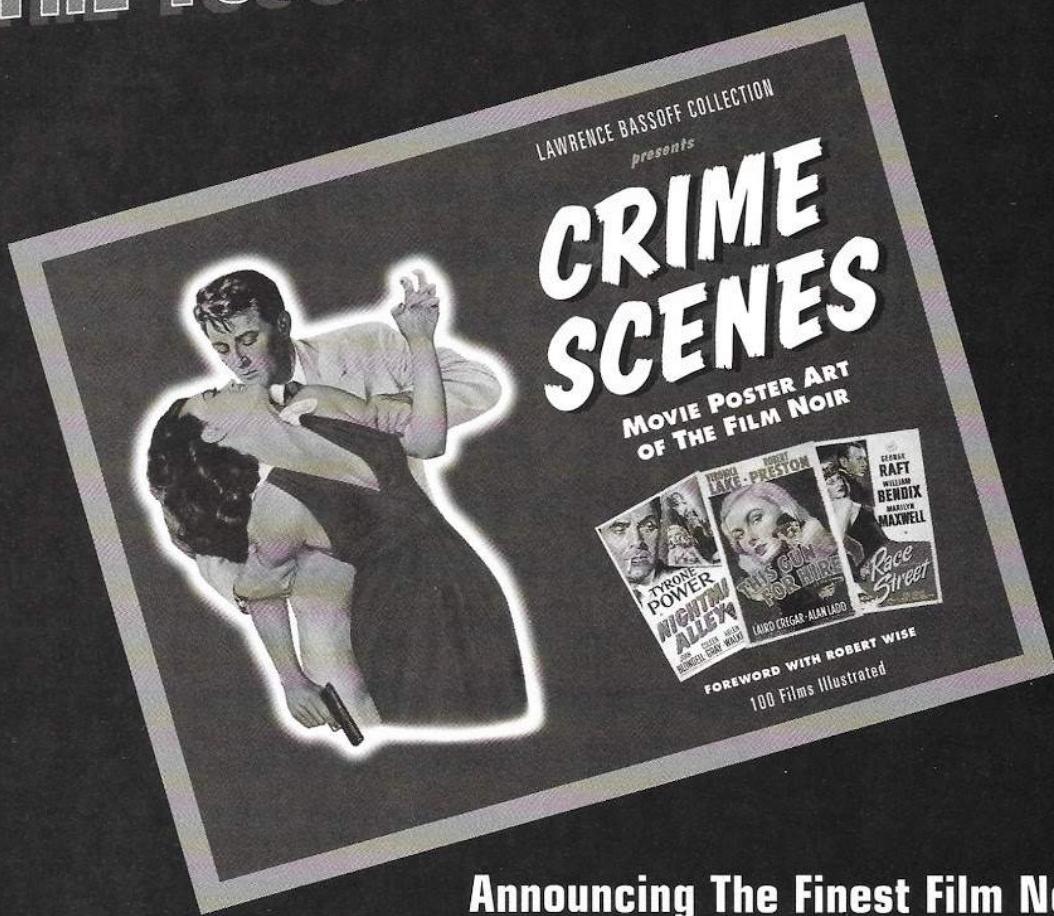
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Johnny Duncan

Continued on page 10

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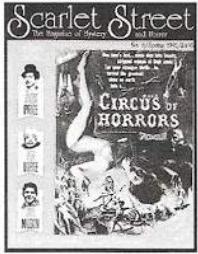
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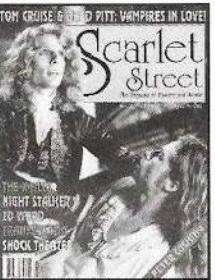
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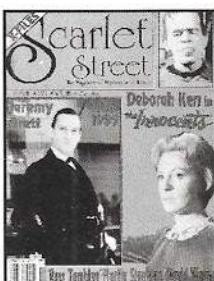
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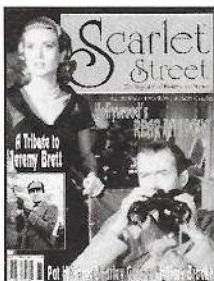
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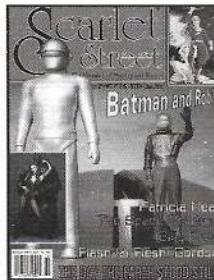
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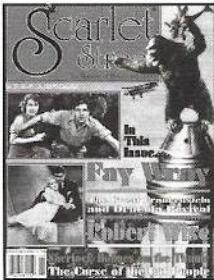
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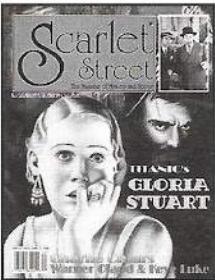
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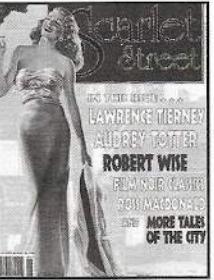
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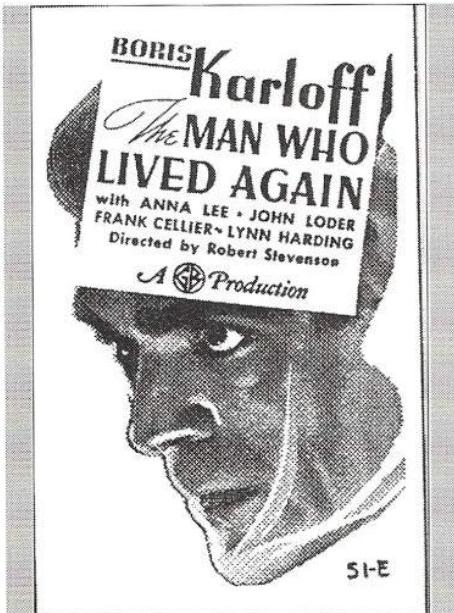
GOLDEN AGE HORROR CLASSICS, Vol. 3 THE BAT WHISPERS (1930, C. Morris), SON OF KONG (1933), MAN WHO LIVED AGAIN (1936, Karloff), THE BLACK COIN (1936), KING OF THE ZOMBIES (1940), HUMAN MONSTER (1939, '50s re-release trailer), THE APE (1940, Karloff), THE MAD MONSTER (1942, Zucco), RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE (1943, Lugosi), THE MAD GHOU (1943, Zucco), INVISIBLE GHOST (1941, Lugosi), BLACK DRAGONS (1942, Lugosi), THE CORSE VANISHES (1942, Lugosi), SPOOKS RUN WILD (1943, Lugosi), THE APE MAN (1943, Lugosi), GHOSTS ON THE LOOSE (1943, Lugosi), VOODOO MAN (1944, Lugosi, Zucco, Carradine), GHOST SHIP (1943, Leeson), CRIT OF THE WEREWOLF (1944), THE PHANTOM SPEAKS (1945), STRANGLER OF THE SWAMP (1945), SPOOK BUSTERS (1946, Bouey Boys), GHOST AND THE GUEST (1943), DEVIL RAT'S DAUGHTER (1946), THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE (1946), BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS (1946) TT62



CALIC HORROR TRAILERS, Vol. 17 GARGANTU (Live Show), DR. SIN'S HOUSE OF THE LIVING DEAD (Live Show), HOUSTON'S MAGIC ACT (Live Show), DR. JERRY (Live Show), DR. JEKYLL'S WEIRD SHOW (Live Show), DR. ROME, GHOSTMASTER (Live Show), CONVENTION OF SPOOKS (Walk-In Horror Show Trailer), HOBGOBLIN SHOW (Walk-In Horror Show Trailer), PHANTOM OF THE RUE MORGUE (1954), TERROR IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE (1958), THE FIENDISH GHOULS (1959, Cushing), HORROR HOTEL (1960, Lee), MASTER OF HORROR (1960), HANDS OF ORIAC (1962, Lee), SLAUGHTER OF THE VAMPIRES (1962), MADMEN OF MONDOURAS (1963), MY BLOOD RUNS COLD (1965), REPULSION (1965), DIABOLICAL DR. Z (1965), EYE OF THE DEVIL (1966), TOMB OF TORTURE (1966), HORRIBLE SEXY VAMPIRE (1970), HOUSE THAT SCREAMED (1970), GURU, THE MAD MONK (1971) TT63

MYSTERY-SUSPENSE-CRIME CLASSICS, Vol. 1 BIG TOWN (1932), AMATEUR CROOK (1937), SPECIAL INSPECTOR (1939), WHAT PRICE VENGEANCE (1937), LET'S GET TOUGH (1942), SHADOWS OVER CHINATOWN (1946, Chan), CHINESE CAT (1944, Chan), BEHIND THE MASK (1946, The Shadow), MISSING LADY (1946, The Shadow), PEARL OF DEATH (1946, Holmes), PURSUIT TO ALGIERS (1945, Holmes), DRESSED TO KILL (1946, Holmes), MURDER IS MY BUSINESS (1946), ELLIS ISLAND (1936, J. LaRue), MYSTERY WOMAN (1935), RIP ROARING RILEY (1935, L. Hughes), RUBBER RACKETEERS (1942), CHARLIE McCARTHY, DETECTIVE (1939), MEN OF ACTION (1935, Darro), CLUB HAVANA (1946), VALLEY OF WANTED MEN (1935, Darro), I RING DOORBELLS (1946), BORN TO FIGHT (1938, Darro), HEADLINE CRASHER (1938, Darro), BAD BOY (1949), MAN FROM HEADQUARTERS (1942), THE SECRET AGENT (1936, Lorre), THE 3RD MAN (1949), BLUEBEARD'S TEN HONEY-MOONS (1960) TT65

CLASSIC SCI-FI TRAILERS, Vol. 14 RIP ROARING RILEY (1935, Puritan), PLAN TOM EMPIRE (1935), SKY BANDITS (1939), RETURN OF CAPTAIN MARVEL (1941, Tyler), TWO LOST WORLDS (1950), THE LOST CONTINENT (1951), RED PLANET MARS (1952, P. Graves), KING DINOSAUR (1955), U.F.O. (1956), BRAIN FROM PLANET AROUS (1957, J. Agar), DAY THE SKY EXPLODED (1958), IT, THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE (1958), GIGANTE, THE FIRE MONSTER (1959), WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL (1959, Belafonte), MADMEN OF MONDOURAS (1963, aka THEY SAVED HITLER'S BRAIN), THE MIND BENDERS (1963), FROZEN ALIVE (1964), DR. STRANGELOVE (1964), SPACEFLIGHT I.C.I. (1965), DIABOLICAL DR. Z (1965, Franco), RAT PINK AND BOO BOO (1966, Steckler), ATOMIC AGENT (1966), WHEN WOMEN HAD TAILS (1970, S. Berger), THE U.F.O. INCIDENT (1975) TT64



## HE-MAN DRAMA OF THE FIGHTING NORTH!



MYSTERY-SUSPENSE-CRIME CLASSICS, Vol. 2 BROADWAY BIG SHOT (1942, Ralph Byrd), MANHATTAN SHAKEDOWN (1939), BOSS OF BIG TOWN (1943, J. Litel), HIDDEN MENACE (1940), GENTLEMAN FROM DIXIE (1941, J. LaRue), INSIDE THE LAW (1942, W. Ford), GALLANT LADY (1942), DETECTIVE KITTY O'DAY (1944), ADVENTURES OF KITTY O'DAY (1944), INCIDENT (1948), I'LL NAME THE MURDERER (1936), NOTORIOUS (1946, Grant), I TAKE THIS OATH (1940), JOHNNY ANGEL (1945, Rafi), I WOULDN'T BE IN YOUR SHOES (1948), BORROWED HERO (1941), GANGSTER'S BOY (1938), STAGE STRUCK (1948), LOUISIANA (1947), FEDERAL BULLETS (1937, M. Stone), THE HUNTED (1948), MURDER BY INVITATION (1941), BIG SHAKEDOWN (1934), A DANGEROUS GAME (1941, Arlen), MAN WHO CRIED WOLF (1937, Lewis Stone), NIGHT KEY (1937, Karloff), THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE (1946, G. Brent), FRANTIC (1958), COVER GIRL KILLER (1959) TT66

ACTION-ADVENTURE CLASSICS, Vol. 1 MIRACLE KID (1942), A YANK IN LIBYA (1942), CLIPPED WINGS (1938), SIGN OF THE WOLF (1941), FIGHTING MARINES (1935), ENCHANTED FOREST (1945, COLOR), DAWN EXPRESS (1942), ZANZIBAR (1940), KLONDIKE FURY (1942, E. Lowe), GINGER (1947), THE BARRIER (1937, J. Ellison), BLAZING BARRIERS (1937), DANNY BOY (1946), FRENCH LEAVE (1948), I CONQUER THE SEA (1936), BORN TO SPEED (1947), OF MICE AND MEN (1939, Chaplin), TWO MINUTES TO PLAY (1937, Brix), MILLION DOLLAR RACKET (1937, Brix), FLYING PISTOLS (1938, Brix), KENTUCKY BLUE STREAK (1935), FIRST YANK INTO TOKYO (1945), ROCKY (1948), KIDNAPPED (1948, McDowell), TUNA CLIPPER (1949), JET ATTACK (1958), TT67

Check out the Sinister Cinema catalog on the Internet. <http://www.cinemaweb.com/sinister>

ACTION-ADVENTURE CLASSICS, Vol. 2 BORN TO FIGHT (1938), VACATION DAYS (1947), FURY BELOW (1938), CRASHING THROUGH DANGER (1938, *Excelsior*), ANYTHING FOR A THRILL (1937, Darro), DEVIL DIAMOND (1937, Darro), MEN OF ACTION (1935, Darro), RACING BLOOD (1936), 23 AND 1/2 HOURS LEAVE (1937), FIVE CAME BACK (1939, *Caradine*), HERE COMES THE NAVY (1934, *Gloria Stuart*), UNDER THE BIG TOP (1938, *J. LaRue*), SWAMP WOMAN (1941), JOAN OF PARIS (1942), MILE A MINUTE LOVE (1937), NEVER TOO LATE (1935, *Talmadge*), IN OLD CHICAGO (1937), TANGER (1946), KID FROM KANSAS (1941, *Foran*), RAIDERS OF THE DESERT (1941), ADVENTURES OF REX AND RINTY (1937), THE CAT'S PAW (1934), ACTION IN ARABIA (1944), FIGHTING POOLS (1949, *Bowery Boys*), ANGELS IN DISGUISE (1949, *Bowery Boys*), SUBMARINE SEAHAWK (1959) **TT68**



THE MAGIC OF MONOGRAM, Vol. 1 FEDERAL BULLETS (1937), UNDER THE BIG TOP (1938, *J. LaRue*), FIGHTING MAD (1939), KING OF THE ZOMBIES (1940), MURDER BY INVITATION (1941, *W. Ford*), GENTLEMAN FROM DIXIE (1941), SPOOKS RUN WILD (1941), KLONDIKE FURY (1942), ROCK RIVER RENEGADES (1942), RUBBER RACKETEERS (1942), THE APE MAN (1943, *Lugosi*), CAMPUS RHYTHM (1943), STRANGER FROM PECOS (1943), WOODOO MAN (1944, *Lugosi*), DETECTIVE KITTY O'DAY (1944), SUNBONNET SUE (1945), SHADOWS OVER CHINATOWN (1946, *Chan*), BEHIND THE MASK (1946, *The Shadow*), SPOOK BUSTERS (1946, *Bowery Boys*), LOUISIANA (1947), SONG OF THE WASTELANDS (1947), MICHAEL O'HALLORAN (1948), I WOULDN'T BE IN YOUR SHOES (1948), FRENCH LEAVE (1948), KIDNAPPED (1948), JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN COURT (1948), ANGELS IN DISGUISE (1949), TRAIL OF THE YUKON (1949), MISSISSIPPI RHYTHM (1949) **TT69**



THE MAGIC OF MONOGRAM, Vol. 2 BLAZING BARRIERS (1937), GANGSTER'S BOY (1938, *J. Cooper*), MAN'S COUNTRY (1938), THE APE (1940, *Karloff*), SIGN OF THE WOLF (1941), INVISIBLE GHOST (1941, *Lugosi*), DOUBLE TROUBLE (1941), BORROWED HERO (1941), WESTERN MAIL (1942, *Keene*), BLACK DRAGONS (1942, *Lugosi*), RHYTHM PARADE (1942), TRAIL RIDERS (1942), MAN FROM HEADQUARTERS (1942), THE CORPSE VANISHES (1942, *Lugosi*), SILVER SKATES (1943, *K. Baker*), GHOSTS ON THE LOOSE (1943, *East Side Kids*), CHINESE CAT (1944, *Chan*), ADVENTURES OF KITTY O'DAY (1944), BEAUTY AND THE BANDIT (1946), MISSING LADY (1946, *The Shadow*), VACATION DAYS (1947), STAGE STRUCK (1948), INCIDENT (1948), FIGHTING RANGER (1948, *J. M. Brown*), MUSIC MAN (1948), ROCKY (1948), FIGHTING POOLS (1949, *Bowery Boys*), TUNI CLIPPER (1949), JACKPOT JITTERS (1949) **TT70**

THE PRIDE OF PRC, Vol. 1 MANHATTAN SHAKEDOWN (1939), I TAKE THIS OATH (1940), GUN CODE (1940, *McCoy*), SWAMP WOMAN (1941), CAUGHT IN THE ACT (1941), BILLY THE KID'S ROUNDUP (1941), MIRACLE KID (1942), THE MAD MONSTER (1942, *Zucco*), DOWN EXPRESS (1942), TEXAS MANHUNT (1942), A YANK IN LIBYA (1942), INSIDE THE LAW (1942, *W. Ford*), GALLANT LADY (1942), LOVE RIDER AND THE BANDIT (1942), BROADWAY BIG SHOT (1942), BOSS OF BIG TOWN (1943), JIVE JUNCTION (1943), GHOST AND THE GUEST (1943), VALLEY OF VENGEANCE (1944), STRANGLER OF THE SWAMP (1945), SONG OF OLD WYOMING (1945), ENCHANTED FOREST (1945, COLOR), COLORADO SERENADE (1946), CLUB HAVANA (1946), DEVIL BAT'S DAUGHTER (1946), THUNDER TOWN (1946), IRING DOORBELLS (1946), HOW DOO YOU DO! (1946), DANNY BOY (1946) **TT71**

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### PLUS! PLUS! PLUS! PLUS! PLUS! PLUS!

You may have noticed that our older trailer volumes (which have been around for years) were nowhere to be found in our new 1998-1999 catalog. We excluded them this year because of space limitations and because we knew we'd have 15 new trailer volumes for you to feast upon come the first week of June (we also hope to someday upgrade some of the older masters). However, don't despair, because the older volumes are still available. Just look in last year's catalog to see which ones you want, then get your order in today. The nice thing is that the older trailer volumes are also available at the new, low price of only...

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SINISTER SIX-GUN CLASSICS, Vol. 3 MYSTERY MOUNTAIN (1934, *Maynard*), OUTLAW GUNS (1935, *Jones*), RED BLOOD OF COURAGE (1935, *Kermitt*), LAST OF THE CLINTONS (1935, *Carey*), LUCKY BOOTS (1936, aka *GUNPLAY*), MAN FROM GUN-TOWN (1936, *McCoy*), RED RIVER VALLEY (1936, *Autry*), RIDIN' ON (1936, *Tyler*), WHISTLING BULLETS (1937, *Kermitt*), DESERT PATROL (1938, *Steele*), FORBIDDEN VALLEY (1938, *Beery*), CODE OF THE CACTUS (1939, *McCoy*), PONY POST (1940, *Brown*), BILLY THE KID TRAPPED (1942, *Crabbe*), OUTLAWS OF BOULDER PASS (1942, *Houston*), LONE STAR LAWmen (1942, *Keene*), ROLLING DOWN THE GREAT DIVIDE (1942, *Powell*), RAIDERS OF GHOST CITY (1944, *Moore*), ROYAL MOUNTED RIDES AGAIN (1945), OVERLAND RIDERS (1946, *Crabbe*), BEAUTY AND THE BANDIT (1946, *Roland*), PIONEER JUSTICE (1947, *LaRue*), SPRINGTIME IN THE SIERRAS (1947, *Rogers*), EYES OF TEXAS (1948, *Rogers*) **TT74**



SINISTER SIX-GUN CLASSICS, Vol. 4 STRAWBERRY ROAN (1933, *Maynard*), THUNDER OVER TEXAS (1934, *Big Boy*), CODE OF THE MOUNTED (1935, *Kermitt*), OUTLAW DEPUTY (1935, *McCoy*), LARAMIE KID (1935, *Tyler*), COURAGE OF THE NORTH (1935), WILDCAT TROOPER (1936, *Kermitt*), LOST RANCH (1937, *Tyler*), ROARING SIX-GUNS (1937, *Kermitt*), THE GUN RANGER (1937, *Steele*), RENEGADE RANGER (1938, *O'Brien*), GUN CODE (1940, *McCoy*), RIDIN' THE TRAIL (1940, *F. Scott*), RIDERS FROM NOWHERE (1940), BILLY THE KID'S SMOKING GUNS (1942, *Crabbe*), TUMBLEWEED TRAIL (1942, *Powell*), IDAHO (1943, *Rogers*), TENTING TONIGHT ON THE OLD CAMP GROUND (1943, *Brown*), VALLEY OF VENGEANCE (1944, *Crabbe*), COLORADO SERENADE (1946, *Dean*, COLOR), GUNSMOKE (1947), RIDERS OF THE WHISPERING PINES (1949, *Autry*), TRAIL OF THE YUKON (1949, *Grant*), SUNSET IN THE WEST (1950, *Rogers*) **TT75**



SINISTER SIX-GUN CLASSICS, Vol. 5 GUN JUSTICE (1934, *Maynard*), RIO RAT-TIER (1935, *Tyler*), NORTHERN FRONTIER (1935, *Kermitt*), TIMBER TERRORS (1935, *Preston*), ROBBIN' GUNS (1936, *McCoy*), WILD HORSE ROUNDUP (1937, *Kermitt*), SECRET VALLEY (1937, *Arlen*), PANAMINT'S BAD MAN (1938, *Ballew*), ORPHAN OF THE PECOS (1938, *Tyler*), RACKETEERS OF THE RANGE (1939, *O'Brien*), SKY RAPTORS (1940, *Newill*), FRONTIER CRUSADER (1940, *McCoy*), BILLY THE KID IN SANTA FE (1941, *Steele*), SILVER STALLION (1941, *Sharpe*), LAW AND ORDER (1942, *Crabbe*), TEXAS MANHUNT (1942, *Powell*), BORDER ROUNDUP (1942, *Houston*), BELLS OF ROSARITA (1945, *Rogers*), GENTLEMAN FROM TEXAS (1946, *Brown*), AMBUSH TRAIL (1946, *Steele*), WILD COUNTRY (1947, *Dean*), RED RIVER (1948, *Wayne*), LOADED PISTOLS (1949, *Autry*), ROY ROGERS RIDERS CLUB **TT76**

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## SCARLET LETTERS

*Continued from page 4*

"Guide to Chan Films" from the fall of last year.

Kudos as well to Joe Collura's fine article on Keye Luke. One should also note that Keye Luke became one of the earliest Asians to star in a Hollywood production when he replaced the great Boris Karloff as Mr. Wong in PHANTOM OF CHINATOWN (1941). One can never read enough about the gracious Keye Luke or his remarkable career.

Charles P. Mitchell  
Millinocket, ME

Rest assured, Charlie Chan and Company will be back in future issues.

• • •

In Drew Sullivan's eye-opening account of the big-screen arrival of TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY (SS #28), one of the producers, Stanley Canter, reveals the fact that the film is a follow-up (but not a sequel) to 1984's GREYSTOKE: THE LEGEND OF TARZAN, LORD OF THE APES and even mentions that ". . . our Tarzan is more forward-looking . . ." However, he doesn't talk about the daunting task that the film sets itself—to remain faithful to Edgar Rice Burroughs' original creation and not the reinvented one from MGM.

The likes of Casper Van Dien's John Clayton or Lord Greystoke (aka Tarzan)—a well-educated and articulate English lord who looks great in evening clothes—hasn't been seen since Her-

man Brix (later Bruce Bennett) brought him to the big screen in THE NEW ADVENTURES OF TARZAN in 1935.

That film was an attempt by Burroughs (through his own production company, Burroughs-Tarzan Enterprises, Inc.) to correct the hugely successful MGM image in its first two Tarzan films, TARZAN, THE APE MAN and TARZAN AND HIS MATE. But Burroughs' film, which actually existed in two different forms—as a 75-minute feature film and as a 12-part serial—was successfully boycotted by MGM, who threatened theater chains with the loss of their product if they chose to exhibit THE NEW ADVENTURES.

The film could only get booked in small independent chains and had little chance of success in the states, but it proved successful in foreign markets and turned Herman Brix into a genuine "name" overseas.

So, perhaps the same "fall-by-the-way-side" fate awaits TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY, but not because the producers are fighting the MGM monolith, which eventually wooed Burroughs back into the fold, but because it might have to fight the apathy of moviegoers who saw the film that laid the necessary groundwork 14 years ago and may no longer feel the same way about rediscovering the true Tarzan.

Raymond Banacki  
Brooklyn, NY

All right, you guys, I really love your magazine! Your articles on the classics of horror are exactly what keeps me an avid customer!

So, having said that—and I know this isn't any of my beeswax—I just finished reading the latest issue, and, frankly, I find myself "troubled" (to borrow a bit of ALLY McBEAL vernacular). There are a few letters that refer to your "agenda;" the article on Hercules and Hylas definitely had an "agenda;" the display ad for the *Movie Buff Checklist* really does not lend to a heterosexual influence (I've never seen such an ad in *Cinefantastique* or *Midnight Marquee* or *Filmfax* or *Cult Movies*) . . .

So maybe I've missed something that is a well-known fact, but . . . are you a gay publication? If you aren't, please accept my apologies! But, if you are, maybe it should be pointed out more openly instead of in strange little innuendos and polarized opinion pieces! As the makers of the absurd documentary THE CELLULOID CLOSET unwittingly proved, a gay subtext can be inferred into virtually anything, ad nauseam!

So, what's next? Jesus and his Disciples were actually into Wesson Oil and KY Jelly? Or maybe John Wilkes Booth was really Abe Lincoln's jilted lover? And what about those Three Musketeers? Gets more and more moronic, doesn't it? Don't shoot yourself in the

*Continued on page 12*

# Frankly Scarlet



"I love having Scarlet Street to talk to, because I can get to the really juicy stuff."

That's what MORE TALES OF THE CITY creator Armistead Maupin told me during a recent telephone conversation, and who am I to contradict one of my favorite writers? He continued:

"I get such pleasure out of the magazine, especially your agenda—and by that I mean your story-telling agenda, your respect for the various institutions of storytelling that have grown up around film. That's the real joy of it, the mythology that we come to understand if we follow the work of a particular artist for awhile, whether they're an actor or a writer or a director. That's what makes it fascinating, more so than a lot of the publications that simply do the official press release."

That's certainly what we shoot for, and I find it extremely reassuring that our efforts are recognized by a man who has given us so many hours of reading and TV-watching pleasure. You'll find a full, juicy interview with Armistead Maupin on page 28 of this issue. It's called SPELLBOUND IN SAN FRANCISCO (which explains the photo below of Gregory Peck and Ingrid Bergman) and it's all about MORE TALES OF THE CITY and a particular artist who has inspired much of Maupin's work: the one and only Alfred Hitchcock.

\*\*\*

Well, it took a bit longer than expected, but at long last we've gotten around to devoting some real quality space to *film noir*. The inspiration was a terrific new book from Lawrence Bassoff called *Crime Scenes: Movie Poster Art of the Film Noir* (Lawrence Bassoff Collection, Inc., \$35), and it's chock full of dynamic poster reproductions, one of which (the sublime, sultry figure of Rita Hayworth as Gilda) graces our cover.

In the past, we've covered in deep, dark depth such *noir* classics as LAURA (1944) and MILDRED PIERCE (1945), but this time we've decided to give Scarlet Streeters an overview of the genre, along with exclusive interviews with tough guy Lawrence Tierney and femme fatale Audrey Totter.

And that's just the beginning. Next issue, along with our usual horror coverage, we'll continue our journey down the

mean streets of *noir* with further coverage of some doomladen classics and terrific interviews with Marie Windsor (1952's THE NARROW MARGIN) and Coleen Gray (1947's NIGHTMARE ALLEY).

*Film Noir* and *Scarlet Street*: it's something to shoot for . . .

Richard Valley



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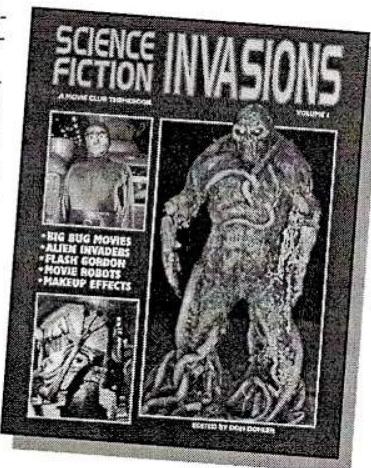
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SS-1

## SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 10

foot, here! Stand with the strength of your convictions, and trust the straight public to respect you for that! But sneaking in this undercurrent will only make people, like myself, uneasy and, ultimately resentful!

So, I'm ready! Tell me to fuck off like the homophobic dog that you think I am! But you know I have a good point!

And your mag is top shelf!

James Burke

soycrud@webtv.net

Scarlet Street is not a gay publication. Neither is Scarlet Street a straight publication. We are, shall we say, an equal opportunity publication, printing gay-themed articles when warranted and straight-themed articles when warranted and downright sexless articles when warranted. However, simply by admitting this, we place ourselves outside the prevalent standards of our sister publications, many of which completely ignore both the many gay aspects of the genre and their many gay fans. The agenda letters you mention are, at this point, something of an in-joke among fans, and we can always expect to hear something appropriately dismissive about our "radical views" when we get a letter from one of our regular readers.

The "Herc and Hylas" piece touches on gay subject matter; the X-FILES reviews do not—no reason to exclude either, as far as we're concerned. That's the whole idea. As for the Movie Buff Checklist, we would never turn down an ad simply due to its gay content, just as we would never turn down an ad simply due to its straight con-

tent. That, I feel, is a position deserving of respect and support. I'll close with a word or six about some other aspects of your letter (which, by the way, was intelligent, amusing, and non-homophobic): I think THE CELLULOID CLOSET is one of the finest documentaries ever produced; the Manhattan Theatre Club production of CORPUS CHRISTI, a new play by Terrence McNally, which hints at Jesus having male lovers among his disciples, was recently almost cancelled due to pressure from religious groups; I have no knowledge of the subconscious motives John Wilkes Booth may have had for wanting to plug Abraham Lincoln; and Three Musketeers are certainly yummy, but personally I've always been a Milky Way man. Keep reading, James!

To whom it may concern, or should I say Clowns in Charge who don't get the facts straight:

I am a young woman (hey, I'm still under 40) who just finished an article of yours so that is the reason I could not respond any sooner.

The issue was #25 and inside on page 33 is an article called ROCKIN' ROBIN: JOHNNY DUNCAN. On pages 35 and 36, Duncan states: "Through the years, I worked with these small actors, because I'm five feet, four inches. Alan Ladd was about five-five and Bogie was about five feet, five and a half inches."

First of all, let me state for the record that I believe in accuracy in the media and everywhere. Furthermore, I don't like tall people because they look out of place and are very intimidating. And I

feel no man should be over 5 feet, 11 inches tall. That's tall enough.

But, I took exception to the statement that Bogart (who was a great actor, by the way, and cute) was five feet, five and a half inches tall in height. Your magazine makes mistakes as proven by the fact that you could not label properly the actors in the CAINE MUTINY still. So it would not surprise me if you make other errors. I can't believe Bogart was the height that Duncan stated. It seems to me a bit exaggerated. Bogart had to be taller.

Your publication should check your facts. There was nothing wrong with Duncan having his own opinion. But, at the end of the article, you clowns should of had his more appropriate height. Otherwise, you just become another raggy magazine that doesn't check or verify statements.

You should also find out about this "lift" business to make actors look taller. I would of liked some background on that because if (and, of course, it's likely) Bogart wore them was he forced to by the movie studio head honchos or did he feel he needed to be taller. Give some insight. Supposedly, Bogart wasn't a phony type so I would like to know the answer. Regardless, I'm sure Bogart was taller and an error like that should have been corrected.

Your magazine would be better getting the facts. I like to hear both pros and cons even on actors and actresses I like. I don't want fluff pieces that just portray them in a good light. But, I do demand

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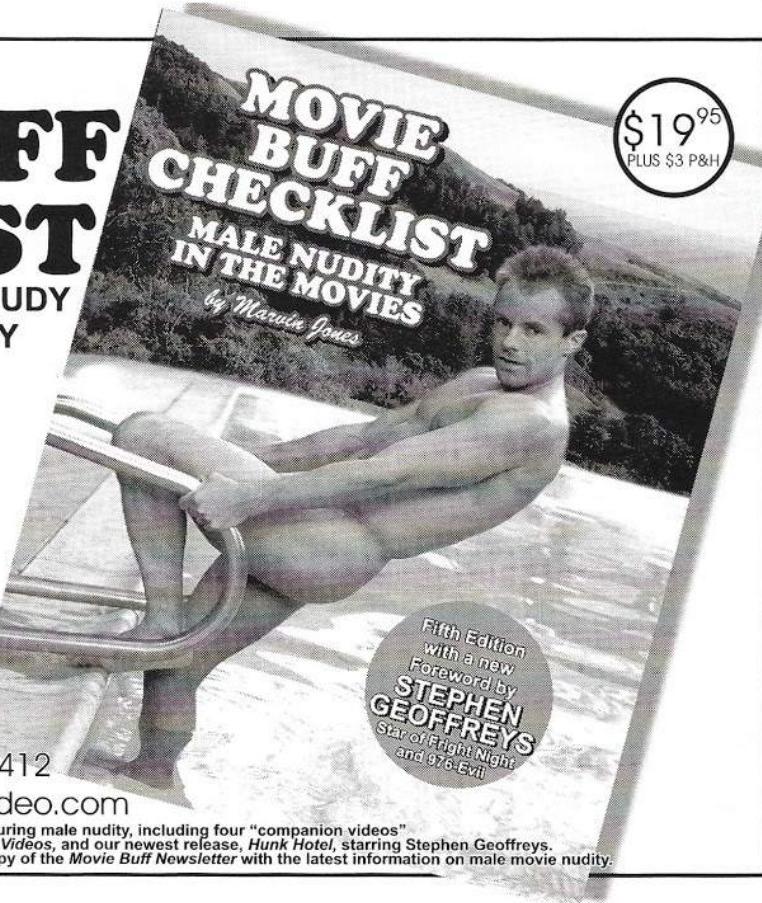
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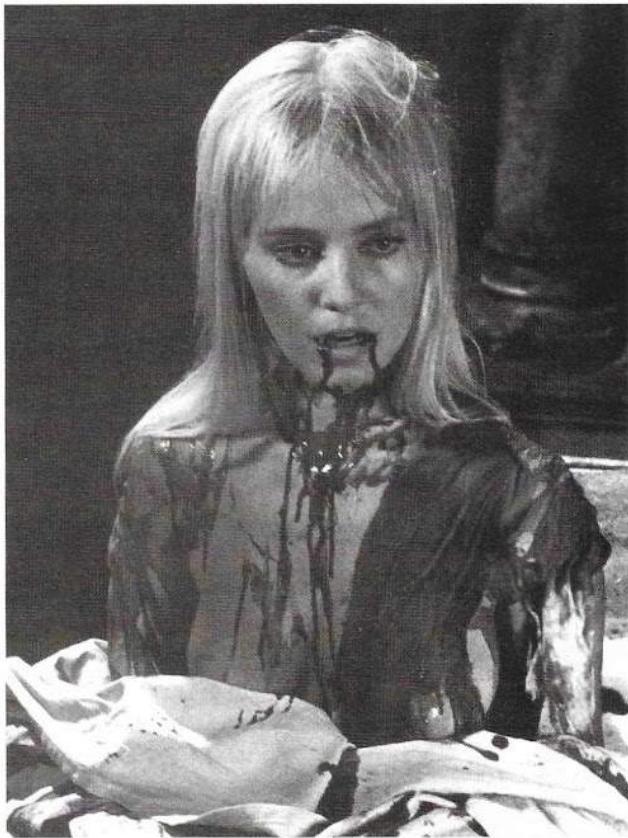
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accuracy for my money. Instead of taking the sleazy slant that your magazine takes, you would be better off stating both sides of issues and getting your facts straight.

A gal who believes in the truth  
Address unknown  
Also Planet . . . .

I'm not much of one to write letters to the editor, but after the last two issues of *Scarlet Street* (#26 and #27) I feel compelled to speak up. I don't recall any magazine in recent history having back to back issues with such great coverage. Issue #26 brought my first exposure to Rick McKay (the excellent David Manners interview), great insight on FRIGHT NIGHT, and a charming chat with Roddy McDowall. I thought SS had peaked with this issue and would forever look upon #26 as its crowning achievement. Nuh-uh . . . .

Lightning does strike twice, it appears, as evidenced by *Scarlet Street* #27. I loved the Rick McKay interview with Fay Wray (and I'm glad you included the recent photo of her and Mr. McKay), the chat with Robert Wise, the coverage of the various incarnations of THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME, and even the laser review of THE CLAIRVOYANT. How fitting that I had just recently picked up THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME and THE CLAIRVOYANT on disc. I felt as though you'd been watching the very same movies I have lately! I guess it's

time to contact the Déjà-vue Coincidence Department . . . .

Now I can hardly wait for Issue #28! Any chance you could go bi-weekly???

Michael D. Walker  
St. Paul, MN

No, no . . . but thanx for asking.

Greetings! I really do love your magazine. I feel that, besides being intelligent and beautifully put together, it offers differing viewpoints that we SF/horror fans rarely see in mainstream and even many offbeat publications. I, for one, welcome the diversity and want to see more of it!

In SS #26, I just loved all the FRIGHT NIGHT coverage. I confess I was a little embarrassed that I never noticed the homosexual themes in the film and I immediately popped my copy into the VCR to review it. I always felt the death scene of Evil Ed was unusual for a horror film, since he was obviously being portrayed as a tragic character, but after reading issue #26, I understood why.

Spenser Benedict's review of *Monsters in the Closet* was very good and I immediately went on the hunt for this book. (Hint: big chain stores not only do not carry it, but most won't order from small presses. I ended up getting it at a non-chain store, an excellent argument for why we need to preserve free enterprise in this country.) The book is very well written and the films that Harry M. Benzoff covers are well dissected, but it

disturbed me a bit that I felt he was not really a horror fan, so was unable to really appreciate the genre he was critiquing. Also, he ignores Euro-horror almost entirely, which makes his study incomplete, since these films have been influencing American films since the fifties (not only the Hammer films, but efforts like Bava's BLACK SUNDAY as well.)

By the way, I hope you won't mind my suggesting a few possible topics for future issues. I'd love anything on Italian horror, especially the work of Dario Argento, whose work in the field of the *giallo* (the Italian mystery film) and supernatural horror makes him a natural for your magazine. I'd love to see articles about modern zombie films, including a filmography, but I guess this might be a bit much for your average reader!

Well, I've certainly bored you enough! Please keep up the good work and do not buckle to the pressures of any narrow-minded fans who may complain. I'd hate to see you become mainstream and ordinary.

Georjean M. Fraina  
Trumbull, CT  
You haven't bored us at all, Georjean.  
And we appreciate the suggestions . . . .

I finally managed to get hold of a copy of *Scarlet Street* #27 and read the fantastic interview with Fay Wray! Wow, I just envy Rick McKay so much. I have loved Fay Wray since I was a kid and first saw her in MYSTERY OF THE WAX

MUSEUM, and he got to spend a whole evening or two with her! It must have been fascinating . . . I know the article was. And did *Scarlet Street* ever receive praise for the David Manners interview? I just think it is so important to get a record of these people (the few that remain) and their experiences during that great era of films. It is such a part of history and I wonder if they themselves realize that.

I was pleased also that Fay's guest shot on *PERRY MASON* was mentioned and that she discussed Raymond Burr (a favorite of mine).

Michael Barnum  
Aopp@aol.com

Love your mag. Now, please try to help me. Am seeking information on the ravishing, mysterious Ramsay Ames. She was the most beautiful of Universal's "mummy's brides." After a few bit parts in Universal cheapies, she first gained recognition in the B film classic, 1943's *CALLING DR. DEATH*, with Lon Chaney. She stole the picture as a gorgeous temptress. Then Ames got her big break, portraying the Amina Mansouri/Princess Ananka role in 1944's *THE MUMMY'S GHOST*, by far the best of the mummy series and one of the most haunting of all horror movies, thanks mainly for Ames, the all-out performance of John Carradine as the High Priest, and the dynamic film score by H.J. Salter and Charles Previn (used re-

lentlessly before and after, but still a great one).

Ames was given a miserable time on the production by director Reginald LeBorg, who had wanted Acquanetta, who was actually cast and began work when she suffered a fall and had to bow out. LeBorg told one writer Ames was "terrible." But it is she everyone remembers long after viewing this haunting masterpiece, especially when her striking beauty withers away and she becomes a mummy. She also imbues her character with a haunting sense of fatality. Ames also had to put up with Lon Chaney's drinking bouts, which made the memorable final sequence of him carrying her, in a beautiful white silk gown, up a steep walkway and eventually into the quicksand, nerve-wracking.

Curiously, there have never been published any "off-screen" publicity shots of *THE MUMMY'S GHOST*, like the ones of a later Princess Ananka, Virginia Christine, teasing Lon Chaney in his Kharis makeup between scenes in *THE MUMMY'S CURSE*, released the same year.

Ames was even more gorgeous with a short hairstyle as an FBI agent in the 1947 Republic Serial, *G-MEN NEVER FORGET*. Although she supported Clayton Moore, her beauty was still stunning. After that, she seems to have vanished. Maybe a story on this long-overlooked Scream Queen? Thanks.

Jerry Tillotson  
New York, NY

Ramsay Ames was indeed a beauty, and we're sorry to report that she died earlier this year. By the way, *THE MUMMY'S GHOST* holds a special place in Ye Reditor's heart, since it was the first horror movie I ever saw. There may be (well, let's face it, there are) better fright flicks out there, but that's the one that hooked me and I'll always be grateful.

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Yes, kids, it's the *Scarlet Street* Slightly Mangled Special. We have in our vaults some issues with minor defects: price tags glued on the covers, a folded page, a gypsy curse scrawled on the classifieds . . . nothing too grim, but enough to render them unsuitable for sale at the usual rate.

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# the NEWS HOUND



Here's your Hound to (dis) temper the dog days of summer with some chilling chatter about future frights . . .

## Theatrical Thrills

Bruce Willis and company have the right stuff to go asteroid smashing in Hollywood Pictures' *ARMAGEDDON*, opening in movie theaters this July. Other July releases include Joe Dante's *SMALL SOLDIERS* (DreamWorks), with Kirsten Dunst caught in the crossfire between battling brigades of toys; *THE MASK OF ZORRO* (TriStar) starring Antonio Banderas and Anthony Hopkins as Zorros Junior and Senior; the unique black and white science fiction thriller *PI* (Live); and Disney's inflation of the 1963 TV sitcom *MY FAVORITE MARTIAN*, with Christopher Lloyd wearing the title antennae. (Don't push that button, Tim!)

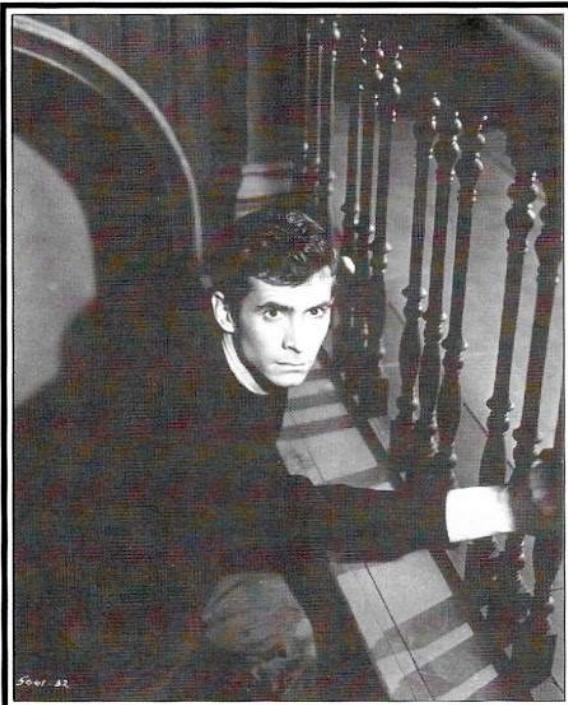
The big-screen version of *THE AVENGERS* (Warner Bros.), toppling Ralph Fiennes, Uma Thurman, and Sean Connery, debuts in August, along with the Stepford-teen thriller *DISTURBING BEHAVIOR* (MGM), Jamie Lee Curtis' turn as shipboard alien bait in *VIRUS* (Universal), and producer Wes Craven's remake (A remake! How original!) of the 1962 cult horror fave *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* (Trimark).

In September, Jamie Lee Curtis returns to her scream-queen roots in *HALLOWEEN H2O* (Dimension), which also stars Adam Arkin and Jamie's screen-star mom Janet Leigh—no stranger to screams herself. Also arriving in theaters in September are a pair of dueling vampire action flicks: Wesley Snipes stars as Marvel Comics' superhero vamp hunter *BLADE* (New Line Cinema), and James Woods portrays Jack Crow, leader of an elite staking team in *JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES* (Sony).

## My Own Private Psycho

Good thing Alfred Hitchcock was cremated—otherwise his grave-spinning would burn him to a cinder. In a move that seems both pointless and sadly inevitable, Hitch's incomparable classic *PSYCHO* is being raped . . . pardon, remade by director Gus Van Sant (*GOOD WILL HUNTING*) and Universal. Joseph Stefano's screenplay for the 1960 original is being utilized in what will reportedly be a shot-for-shot, line-for-line recreation, filmed in color on new locations. (Hey, you can't expect a modern audience to watch black and white!) It sounds to The Hound more

like a Xerox copy than a motion picture. Vince Vaughn of *SWINGERS* plays the knife-swinging Norman Bates; Anne Heche steps into Janet Leigh's shower stall as Marion Crane, whose gruesome death in the original was as shocking to sixties audiences as it will be anticlimactic to today's. Julianne Moore (*BOOGIE NIGHTS*) plays Marion's sister Lila, portrayed originally by Vera Miles; Viggo Mortensen (*THE PROPHESY*) plays the John Gavin role of Marion's boy toy Sam, and *FARGO*'s William H. Macy plays Sheriff Chambers, first portrayed by John McIntire. Despite its talented cast, this effort seems more suited to a taxidermy shop than a movie theater. Pardon The Hound's foam.



Very high on our list of unnecessary remakes is Alfred Hitchcock's *PSYCHO* (1960), with Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates.

## Show Me Demony

As reported here last fall, a prequel to *THE EXORCIST* is in the works. William Peter Blatty, author of the original novel, is due to write and direct the new installment (the same duties he performed for the 1990 follow-up *EXORCIST III*). The new film will reportedly cover events from 20 to 100 years before the demonized little Regan was but a speck of soup in her mom's eye.

But the devilish doings don't stop there. The Fox TV network has acquired

Blatty's services to adapt his original novel into a four-hour miniseries that may air as early as September. Production is due to start soon in Toronto, and work on lots of computer-generated effects is already under way.

Meanwhile, viewers who'd rather have the 1973 original in their possession will be thrilled by Warner Home Video's 25th anniversary remastered release, available in August on VHS, laser-disc, and DVD. In addition to a remixed stereo soundtrack, the new release adds a 1998 BBC documentary that highlights 12 minutes of unreleased scenes—including a deleted sequence in which Regan flips over backwards and walks downstairs like a spider. Or a Slinky.

Ah, well . . . watch it and decide for yourself.

## Future Creature Features

Madonna plays a TV news reporter in Florida who starts getting dangerous brainstorms when the President comes to town in *AMBROSE CHAPEL* (MGM), Brian De Palma's next thriller after his upcoming August release *SNAKE EYES*. *CHAPEL* (whose title, if not plot, is taken from Hitchcock's *THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH*) will also star Brad Pitt, Liam Neeson, and Martin Sheen.

Yo, ho, ho and a bucket of blood! Special effects makeup ace Tom Savini (who's not too shabby as an actor, either) is ready to start production on his independent horror comedy *VAMPIRATES*, in which he will star and direct.

## Couch Potato Cinema

George Clooney tumbles through time in a big-screen version of Irwin Allen's enjoyably cheesy 1966 TV series *THE TIME TUNNEL*, now in development at 20th Century Fox. Clooney plays Dr. Doug Phillips, who, along with Stephen Dorff as Dr. Tony Newman, gets caught in the titular tube, stumbling aimlessly (and amazingly) through key moments in history. (The show's first episode landed them on the Titanic, but that might be redundant at this point, mightn't it?) Rebecca DeMornay plays Dr. Anne MacGregor, the serene scientist surveying the chronologic mess. The \$110 million production begins soon, with a summer 1999 release date planned—but time will tell. There are rumors that Paramount may salvage another Irwin Allen favorite, *VOYAGE TO*

*Continued on page 18*



**A**h, there's something about a good musical with a singing serial killer that sets the heart soaring—and *NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY* is a very good musical indeed. Douglas J. Cohen, who brilliantly based his book, music, and lyrics on the William Goldman novel of the same name and the 1968 film that followed, has captured just the right mix of murder and show biz savvy (the killer is an out-of-work actor determined to prove his versatility to his theater-star mother, recently deceased) to make the story both chilling and amusing.

The plot of all three versions follow police detective Morris ("Moe") Brummel as he attempts to stop Christopher Gill, a killer who rates his "performances" by the coverage they receive in *The New York Times*. Along the way he meets and falls in love with witness Sarah Stone, much to the consternation of his mother, Flora (who has never quite gotten over the fact that her son is a Jewish detective, not a doctor). Both the film and the musical are rather less bloodthirsty than the novel, however, which goes so far as to make Sarah one of Gill's victims.

Last fall, at the invitation of Varese Sarabande executive Bruce Kimmel, I attended the recording session for the cast album of Cohen's *NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY*. It was a fascinating experience, especially the manner in which decisions were made to heighten the impact of the story via music, sound effects, and performance.

"We want a sinister sound here," Kimmel announced at one point. "If we add some music to the beginning of the dialogue, it'll create a sense of danger."

Later, it was decided to try an echo effect for a flashback scene, and a discussion ensued over whether to use a "low rumble" from the orchestra over the sound of a gun shot or the line, "Watch her die."

In the movie, Moe, Sarah, Flora, and Gill were played by George Segal, Lee Remick, Eileen Heckart, and Rod Steiger, respectively. (The movie's Gill is a Broadway producer, not an actor.) On the CD they are Adam Grupper, Marquerite MacIntyre, Alix Korey, and Paul Schoeffler, and all are delightful. In particular, Korey is

# NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY

## by Richard Valley

astonishing, since she not only plays Moe's mother, but Gill's as well—plus all his victims!

"I want to punch one thing," announced Kimmel at one point. "The thing I want to punch is Alix."

What he meant, of course, was that he wanted to "punch up" her performance in the song "I Need a Life." "I have a little problem with this dialogue. She's not having enough fun with the word 'perishable.' I can't see her face, and of course listeners won't see her face, and the word has to be emphasized."

Before recording, other performances were fine-tuned by Kimmel, including his own. "The first voice you hear on this recording is mine—I like that. I'm the voice of the newsman on the radio. Adam, remember that you're just waking up when this number begins. I'm not getting the sense that you're tired."

Finally, everything was ready to go for another take. "Let's make magic," somebody yelled.

Kimmel, who spends much of his time in the recording studio, smiled. "You want magic, you call David Copperfield. Okay, we're now going to record the song 'I Need a Life'—a song I completely understand."

**ABOVE LEFT:** Rod Steiger is unhappy with his publicity in the film *NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY* (1968). **BELOW:** the cast of the musical: Marquerite MacIntyre, Paul Schoeffler, Alix Korey, and Adam Grupper.



Photo: Carol Rosegg

# GODZILLA SWAG

**H**e made his movie debut in 1954 billed as the King of the Monsters. He destroyed Tokyo, then returned for a series of films in which he was pitted against such titans of terror as King Kong, Mothra, Rodan, Baragon, Anguirus, and Ghidorah the Three Headed Monster. He was called Gojira in Japan, Godzilla in the United States, and he was (and is) beyond a doubt one of the screen's biggest superstars.

And now he's got his own compact disc! In fact, the big lug has two compact discs! (Can a Vegas date be far behind?)

Cleverly timed to tie in with a certain summer blockbuster (which is proving to be rather more of a bust than a buster), GNP/Crescendo has unleashed upon the world THE BEST OF GODZILLA 1954-1975 (GNP/Crescendo 8055) and THE BEST OF GODZILLA 1985-1995, almost 160 minutes of Music to Stomp Toy Cities By . . .

All that's missing is a little solemn narration by Raymond Burr.

Frankly, I wasn't expecting very much from these CDs, my personal admiration for the Big G extending only so far as GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN (1959), which reached the States under the title GIGANTIS, THE FIRE MONSTER. (The plot concerns Godzilla changing his name and trying to sneak back into Tokyo sporting glasses, a cigar, and a big black mustache—hey, listen, it makes as much sense as some of the other sequels.) Following the travesty that was KING KONG VS. GODZILLA (1962), I turned my attention to the stop-motion masterpieces of Ray Harryhausen and was rewarded with ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. (1966) and THE VALLEY OF GWANGI (1969). But these delightful new discs have turned out to be a pleasant surprise, even for someone who has only glanced at the dozen odd (very odd)

Godzilla films that have delighted dino-fans in the past 35 years.

Actually, the most charming cut on the first disc is not from a Godzilla flick at all; it's that catchy hit tune known to one and all as "Mothra's Song," from that fun 1962 flick MOTHRA (okay, so I saw that one, too), with music by Yuji Koseki and lyrics by Tomoyuki Tanaka, Shinichi Sekizawa, and Ishiro Honda. It's sung by the Peanuts, and they do it up proud. (The ditty is repeated in 1964's GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA, so it does have a legit place here.)

The rest of the CDs are filled with some great movie music, the best of which is by Akira Ifukube (including some genuinely scary stuff written for Godzilla's first attack on Japan). The cues include some bouncy military marches, a few indescribable pop tunes, a sound effect or two, and special guest vocals by the Big G himself, Mothra, and Rodan. (Okay, so I saw 1956's RODAN, too, and in 1957 I was right there in line with all the other little monsters for THE MYSTERIANS.)

But these discs. You'll get a bang out of them . . .

—Richard Valley



## NEWS HOUND

*Continued from page 16*

THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, as yet another soggy vehicle for Kevin Costner.

Raging Bullwinkle? Robert DeNiro's Tribeca Productions is developing a big-screen version of THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE for Universal. Stage director Des McAnuff may helm this planned 1999 release, which will combine live action and animation, ROGER RABBIT-style. Get out your scrooch guns! . . . Rumors abound that British sci-fi series RED DWARF and DR. WHO will get feature film treatments soon. Stay tuned.

### Novel Ideas

*The Club Dumas*, the supernatural novel by Spanish author Arturo Perez-Reverte, will film this Summer as THE NINTH GATE (Live Entertainment) by writer/director Roman Polanski. Johnny Depp stars as a book dealer who becomes embroiled in a dangerous conspiracy while tracking down a rare book with demonic powers. Lena Olin and Frank Langella costar . . . Jeffrey Deaver's superb mystery thriller *The Bone Collector* is in development as a Universal feature. Denzel Washington will portray quadriplegic NYPD detective Lincoln Rhyme,

a forensic expert on the trail of a serial killer with the help of his "leg man," Officer Amelia Sachs.

David Fincher (THE GAME) may direct a screen version of L.A. Confidential author James Ellroy's novel *The Black Dahlia*, based on the famous Hollywood murder case of the forties . . . Softspoken Harlan Ellison's novella *Mefisto In Onyx* is planned as a feature film by actor/producer Samuel L. Jackson . . . Playwright/screenwriter David Mamet is reportedly scripting a faithful version of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, to star noted British thespian Al Pacino in the title roles.

### Recycling Center

Producer Edward R. Pressman plans to remake his 1973 production SISTERS, this time without collaborator Brian De Palma. He's also planning a remake of the 1965 Italian sci-fi thriller THE 10TH VICTIM, which starred Ursula Andress as a sexy assassin . . . Pierce Brosnan assumes the Steve McQueen role of a bored executive who tries his hand at bank robbery in a new version of THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR (MGM).

Ben Edlund, the happily warped mind behind THE TICK, plans to remake the

1964 sci-fi classic SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS . . . Break out the wah-wah pedals: actor Don Cheadle (DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS) will write and direct a remake of blaxploitation favorite CLEOPATRA JONES for Universal. No word on who'll be slipping on the platform pumps in the lead role. The Hound votes for RuPaul—no contest.

Much to no one's surprise, it'll be déjà vu all over again on cinema screens as sequels to HIGHLANDER (Dimension), THE NUTTY PROFESSOR (Universal), MEN IN BLACK (Columbia), TRUE LIES (Fox), and TOTAL RECALL (Miramax) begin development. Another competitor in the Pointless Sequels competition is CARRIE 2, now in production at United Artists. Yes, that's right, Carrie died in the original film. The only survivor of the Bates High School conflagration, Amy Irving, is back on board as school guidance counselor to Carrie's cousin, who—you guessed it—is a troubled teen psychic.

The next voyage of the Starship Enterprise, tentatively titled STAR TREK: REBELLION (Paramount), is scheduled for release this December. The title does not refer to those fans who want Captain Kirk back . . . 007 fans will be spying the next James Bond adventure at the end

of 1999 . . . Secret agent Austin Powers will also be back in action—Mike Myers and Elizabeth Hurley will return in *AUSTIN POWERS 2: IT'S SHAGGING TIME!*

#### Updates Aplenty

Oscar-winning director Mel (Foot in Mouth) Gibson wants Tom Cruise to star as Montag the "fireman" in a new version of Ray Bradbury's *FAHRENHEIT 451*, following Cruise's duties in the *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE* sequel for ace action helmer John Woo. Cruise will stretch his acting abilities as a man who likes to read. Zentertainment News reports that production on the Warner Bros. production of *FAHRENHEIT* is due to begin next spring . . . Speaking of Ah-nold, he won't be starring in *I AM LEGEND*, the planned update of Richard Matheson's novel, since Warner Bros. pulled the plug.

Universal's update of *THE MUMMY* is under way, starring Brendan Fraser (minus his loincloth) as a Roaring Twenties treasure hunter, and erstwhile *DARKMAN* Arnold Vosloo in the tightly-wrapped title role . . . *GODZILLA* producers Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin say they have no intention to shoot a sequel to their mammoth 1996 hit *INDEPENDENCE DAY*. Whew!

#### Television Terrors

The Fox TV network has renewed the dark drama *MILLENNIUM* for a third season. Producer Chris Carter has greatly improved this series by transplanting some of his best *X-FILES* writers and producers. This fall's change of locale from Seattle to Washington, D.C. (Lance Henriksen's character Frank Black becomes a consultant to the FBI), will allow for some crossovers with *X-FILES* characters . . . Fox continues to mine the paranormal with a new series entitled *BRIMSTONE*, scheduled for Tuesday nights this fall. It stars *THIRTYSOMETHING*'s Peter Horton as a formerly dead cop who works the dead-of-night shift: he's on assignment from the Devil to put the cuffs on escapees from Hell.

Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo, producers of the late, great CBS series *THE FLASH*, have had their UPN show *THE SENTINEL* axed, but may return to CBS with a new series entitled *IT'S TRUE*. Coproduced with macabre cartoonist Gahan Wilson, it's about TV show hosts who investigate paranormal sightings. It sounds suspiciously similar to Fox's upcoming Thursday night show *HOLLYWEIRD*, producers Shaun Cassidy and Wes Craven's attempt to lure

the *BUFFY* crowd. *HOLLYWEIRD* details the exploits of three Midwestern teens who take their cable TV access show on the road to L.A. to investigate crimes that are, like, way bizarre.

The UPN network has renewed the sloooowly-improving *STAR TREK VOYAGER* for another season. UPN's new series *MERCY POINT*, a sci-fi medical drama (think *E.R.* in space) begins this fall on Tuesday nights. Another new UPN addition is *WAY OUT THERE*, the umbrella title of a series of Thursday night sci-fi-fantasy-adventure movies.

The WB network begins a new animated *BATMAN* spinoff this fall: *BATMAN TOMORROW*. Set in the mid-21st century, a 90-year-old Bruce Wayne becomes mentor to the teenaged Terry McGavin, who, like Dick Grayson, is orphaned when his parents are murdered . . . Premiering in syndication this Fall is *HIGHLANDER: RAVEN*, starring Elizabeth Gracen as the immortal Amanda, her character from the departed *HIGHLANDER* series . . . Showtime's *OUTER LIMITS* series has been renewed for 34



Mercy! *DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE* and the hero is about to fall off the balcony!

more episodes. Also renewed by the pay-cabler for another two seasons is *STARGATE SG-1*, which will begin reruns this fall on Fox broadcast stations.

#### The Home Video Vault

Already ripe for rental at a video emporium near you: top-grossing slasher se-

quel *SCREAM 2* (Dimension), supernatural murder mystery *FALLEN* (Warner Bros.), and one of those Kevin Costner post-apocalyptic adventures, *THE POSTMAN* (Warner).

Coming to video in July is the Dean Koontz terror tale *PHANTOMS* (Dimension) and yet another in the series of Stephen King spin-offs *CHILDREN OF THE CORN V: FIELDS OF TERROR* (Dimension). If you film it, they will rent. Tentatively set for July release are the sci-fi horror flicks *SPHERE* (Warner) and *DEEP RISING* (Buena Vista). *DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE*—and he'll inhabit your laserdisc player in July in a widescreen Warner Home Video laser edition for \$34.98. More great Hammer horror is in store for laser collectors in July with the release of *THE MUMMY'S SHROUD* and *FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN* (Elite; letterboxed; \$39.95 each).

Finally coming to home video in August is Disney's dark Medieval animated feature from 1985, *THE BLACK CAULDRON*. Also in August, Disney debuts their direct-to-video Ray Bradbury adaptation *THE WONDERFUL ICE CREAM SUIT*. Stuart Gordon (*RE-ANIMATOR*) directs from a script by Bradbury himself, based on his 1972 stage play. And keep a sharp eye on the horizon for *TITANIC* (Fox), tentatively set for a video release in August, and *GODZILLA* (Columbia-TriStar), who may be trampling video stores in December.

This Halloween brings a new video release of the legendary silent horror-comedy-fantasy *LES VAMPIRES*, the 1915 French production by writer-director Louis Feuillade. This 10-part, seven hour serial about a bloodthirsty criminal gang led by the mysterious Irma Vep (that's "vampire" spelled sideways) has been meticulously restored by Water Bearer Films. Call 800-551-8304 for further information.

Gone, but never to be forgotten: screenwriters Wolf Mankowitz and Jerome Bixby, comic-book writer Archie Goodwin, songwriter Bob Merrill, comedian Henny Youngman, longtime Hitchcock assistant Peggy Robertson, actors Lloyd Bridges, J.T. Walsh, Philip Abbott, Dorothy Stickney (at 101!), Donald Woods, Maidie Norman, "Bride of Frankenstein" Josephine Hutchinson, Phil Hartman, John Derek, Gene Raymond, Jeanette Nolan, and singers Frank Sinatra and Alice Faye.

Send The Hound your questions, comments and compliments at *TheNews-Hound@yahoo.com*.



# Coming Up Next in Scarlet Street: **CLIVE BARKER ON GAMES WHALE**

# Crimson Chronicles

by Forrest J Ackerman

**R**ed Letter Day for the Crimson Chronicler: May 3, 1998, the Saturday after Memorial Day that became a memorable day for 1,000 Kongophiles who descended on the Indian Hills Cinerama theater in Omaha, Nebraska, to celebrate with Ray and wife Diana Harryhausen, Ray Bradbury, Greg Bear, and Yours Kongcerely, FJA, the 65th Anniversary of the Eighth Wonder of the World—KING KONG.

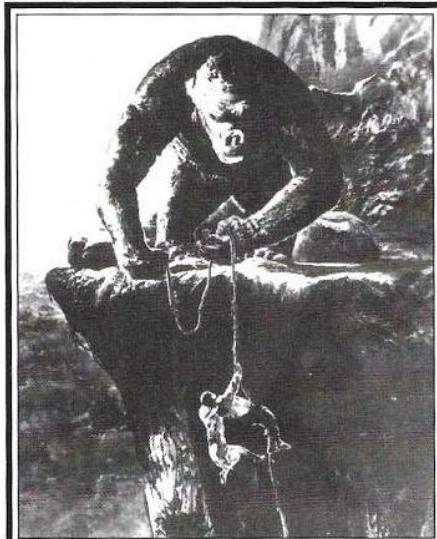
Harryhausen and I were interviewed the day before on live TV news and, on the Great Night, the two Rays and I stepped from a Godzilla-long stretch-mobile into the glare of flashlights and telecaptors as we were recorded for posterity arriving at the gala event. It was a sellout. Inside the luxurious auditorium, each Ray in turn received a standing ovation as he was escorted down the aisle to the stage, where, on the microphone, each told of the influence Kong, Willis O'Brien, Marcel Delgado, and I had had on their lives.

After being forced to wear a tie for three years four months and 29 days during WW2, I swore I'd never wear one again, not even to my own funeral, but in honor of the King of Skull Island I put on a tux and tie. I brought with me the pteranodon that was trying to fly away with Fay, and Delgado's model got plenty of attention. I acquired it years ago from the brother of the late Rod Serling of TWILIGHT ZONE fame. I told the audience that when it arrived in the mail in a shoebox, I had to dash over to the nearest fan friend who would appreciate my treasure and show it to him. Unfortunately, his wife came to the door and she wasn't familiar with the film or had never seen an animodel of a saurian. She ran to her husband, screaming, "I think Mr. Ackerman is here with a dead crow!"

I also told how Kong had saved a young filmonster fan's life. The fan as a grown man told me that when he was a child he came from a dysfunctional family; his father was in prison for murder and his mother committed suicide. He decided life wasn't worth living and was on the verge of committing suicide when he got the new issue of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* that I was editing and there

was my fictionized story of KING KONG. He was avidly reading it when he came to the last page and it said . . . To Be Continued Next Month. Well, he had to wait, and by the time four weeks had passed he was out of the mood. So King Kong may have destroyed many lives but at least he saved one!

Bruce "Cabot" Crawford was the 41-year-young entrepreneur responsible for the Kong revival in Omaha and he deserved a 13-drum salute for his accomplishment. He even arranged for a 21-piece dancing ensemble of enchanting



KING KONG (1933)

young girls from 13 to 25 to appear as painted-face, suntanned natives performing a nifty native dance.

When the lights went up, the two Rays and Greg Bear and I went up the aisle and took our places behind a long table. Before we knew it, there was a line snaking back on itself like fans waiting for a ride at Disneyland! I swear it must have stretched into the next state! We signed and signed till after midnight! What a gala occasion!

I've suggested to Roger that if he's contemplating doing something next year for a 60th anniversary of a film, he might chose SON OF FRANKENSTEIN, and hopefully get 96-year-old Curt

Siomak as Guest of Honor, perhaps double-billing SON with one of Curt's dozens of horror films, such as HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE, THE WOLF MAN, et al. We'll see.

At the Kong "con," I learned that Ray Harryhausen will be going later on this year to Hiroshima as guest of honor at an animation festival. Greg Bear has a fascinating new book out called *Dinosaur Summer*, with Harryhausen, Willis O'Brien, Marcel Delgado, Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack, Professor Challenger, and other real and imaginary characters participating in fantastic adventures in an alternate world where live dinosaurs appear in circuses! Incidentally, I hate to embarrass him in print, but I caught Greg Bear in a flagrant case—or was it blatant?—of plagiarism. I had inscribed a copy of my *World of Science Fiction* for him, "With admiration & affection." He inscribed a copy of his sci-fi novel *Slant* to me, "With admiration & affection!" If I were an Omaha Indian, I might Sioux him!

At the World Horror Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, in May, I was amongst 500 horror fans, including writers such as guest of honor Brian Lumley from England, Brit Stephen Jones, my Ackermanology collaborator Pam Keesey, Dennis Etchison, John Shirley, and numerous others. One midnight we went out to a desert where 21 writers sat around a campfire reading horror stories. At the horrorcon's dealer room, I added a baker's dozen of Dracula works to my already 250 copies. Which reminds me: The evening I arrived in Omaha, as I was being driven to my hotel, a car drove in front of us with the unlikely license plate . . . FJA! The next day I noticed a license plate DLR. Mundane observers probably would have interpreted it as Dealer, but we know better, don't we? Dracula Loves Renfield.

Dead at 75, Jerome Bixby, scripter of IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE and CURSE OF THE FACELESS MAN. At 92, last spfx wizard of KONG, stalwart gentleman Linwood Dunn.



Read Uncle Forry in every issue of Scarlet Street!

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# SCREEN...



## and Screen AGAIN!



### Scarlet Street's Laser Review

**AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON**  
Live Entertainment  
Two Sides CLV  
\$39.95

John Landis blessed us with a masterpiece in 1981 and created a whole new subgenre at the same time. Breaking ground for such marvelous films such as FRIGHT NIGHT (1985) and BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER (1992), and television shows such as SHE-WOLF OF LONDON and, uh, BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER, AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON was something new—a horror/comedy that worked completely on both levels.

David "I'm a Pepper" Naughton and Griffin Dunne star as David and Jack, a couple of pals on summer break backpacking across Europe. (That used to sound like a good idea to some people in the seventies.) On a miserable rainy night in northern England, they ignore the locals' advice to "beware the moon, lads" and find themselves lost on the moors with something much hairier than Heathcliff stalking them. They are savagely attacked by a huge wolf which the locals manage to shoot, but not before it kills Jack and mauls David. David awakes weeks later in a London hospital to the news that his friend is dead. He asks about the wild animal that attacked them, but everyone insists it was a man—they have a body and everything. But David knows it was a wolf, and can't convince the rather inept constabulary that something about Jack's death is being covered up.

Lessening David's pain and loneliness is lovely nurse Alex, played serenely by big-eyed LOGAN'S RUN alum Jenny Agutter, with whom he strikes up a relationship. While recuperating "in hospital" as they say across the pond, David

is unexpectedly visited by the graphically mangled corpse of his pal Jack, who proceeds to inform him that it was a werewolf that attacked them and that David is going to become one himself. Jack whines about being dead: "Did you ever talk to a corpse? It's boring!" The startling contrast between Rick Baker's utterly convincing horror makeup (including anatomically correct ripped-out throat), and Jack's utterly blaze attitude ("Can I have a piece of toast?") as he decomposes before our eyes, sets the tone for what follows—a full-out horror film that will have you screaming in terror and laughing your ass off not just alternately, but simultaneously.

Of course David changes at the next full moon, just like Jack's moldering corpse said he would. (During the transformation scene, Rick Baker shows the rest of the cinematic world how to do special effects makeup the right way.) David's first nocturnal lycanthropic excursion through London is chock full of

everything we want in a horror film. While the gore is chillingly convincing, the film's horror scenes are edited more toward scaring the bejeezus out of us than grossing us out. Each attack is made up perfectly of suspense, followed with the short, sharp shock of the animal's strike and maybe a quick revelation showing us the gore as a passerby accidentally steps in a victim. Baker's masterful monster, shown in bits and glimpses, chills to the bone, particularly in the attack of a lone late-night subway rider. David's harrowing first night out is followed with a truly hilarious bit of comic relief, as he wakes up naked in the wolf cage at the zoo, and tries to get back to Alex's apartment inconspicuously. His confusion later turns to terror when he learns of the previous night's murders and realizes he must do something before he kills again.

My one nitpick with WEREWOLF is an ending so sudden that I thought someone had changed the channel on me. A little epilogue would have helped, say, a scene with Jack and David backpacking through heaven together as Jack says, "I told you we should have gone to Italy." But no, they never ask me before they write these things.

This 90-minute film is presented in 1.85:1 letterboxing, on one disk. The CLV recording is spotless and sharp, and the digital stereo sound is likewise flawless. Nineteen chapter stops are indexed on the jacket to help you relive the grisly death of your choice.

Enjoy. And, beware the moon . . .  
—John E. Payne

**THE NIGHT STALKER**  
CBS Fox  
Two Sides CLV  
\$39.95

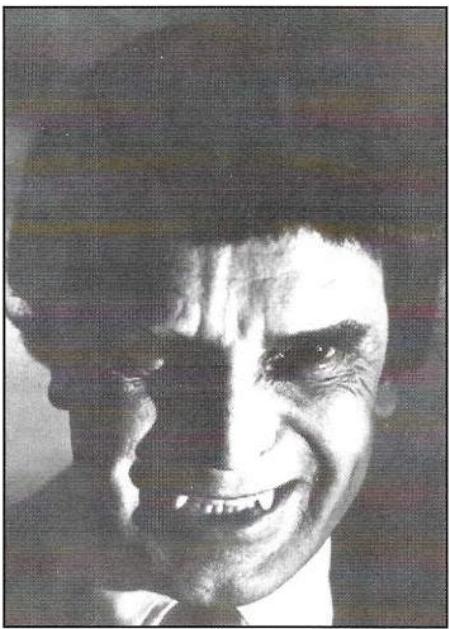
That ol' devil Dan Curtis loves to play with vampires, and the world is a better place for it. After his TV series DARK SHADOWS wrapped, Curtis dug us up another vampire and produced THE NIGHT STALKER as an ABC TV movie.

Told in classic *film noir* first-person narrative style, it's the story of a low-



rent Las Vegas reporter named Carl Kolchak, a crusty, dry-witted, cocksure newshound who operates in the style of the classic cheap detective, using snitches, inside contacts, and basically butting in wherever there's a story. He's assigned to cover a series of local murders, and all the evidence leads him to believe the impossible—that there's a vampire in Vegas. His boss doesn't believe him; the cops don't believe him . . . you know the drill. But when the cops catch up to the killer and everyone present (including Kolchak) witnesses him taking bullets without effect and shot-putting police officers one-handed . . . well, no one believes it then, either.

Richard Matheson's intelligent script, along with classic seventies-style cinematography and perfect performances, bring us a very convincing story of an average shnook drawn into circumstances beyond the scope of his experience. Kolchak knows what he knows, but he's all alone in this, and his reporter's nose and his simple humanity won't let him leave it alone, to the ruin



of his own life. Like his direct descendant, Fox "Spooky" Mulder (Do I need to tell Scarlet Streeters that Kolchak was Chris Carter's inspiration for THE X-FILES? Anyone who didn't know that, please close this mag and hang your head in shame for one minute), he will find the truth, if only for the byline.

Darren McGavin brilliantly gives life to Kolchak, whose awful wardrobe and hangdog face disguise the manic seeker of truth underneath. (In one scene, he actually interposes his body between some witnesses and the police officer questioning them, so he can shove his ubiquitous tape recorder in their face, as if he's the one they should be addressing.) The film's vampire, Janos Skorzeny, is the antithesis of Dan Curtis' "other" vampire, the charming and tra-

gically cursed Barnabas Collins of DARK SHADOWS. Played to terrifying perfection by Barry Atwater, Skorzeny and his utter lack of humanity are amplified by his complete lack of dialogue. His only vocalizations throughout the story are evil animalistic snarls fit to chill the blood he's about to take from you. He's everything one would expect if vampires were real.

And as Kolchak's bluff boss, Tony Vincenzo, Simon Oakland is everything one would expect an editor to be if they were real . . .

A sequel, THE NIGHT STRANGLER, followed, and a TV series was spawned in which Kolchak had the unlikely misfortune to continually stumble over every type of monster in the book, much as Angela Lansbury's friends kept getting bumped off on MURDER SHE WROTE. It began to beg credibility. Nevertheless, thanks to its style and wit—and, of course, Darren McGavin—the film and the series remain classics in the hearts of discriminating genre fans.

Except for a couple of audio spikes, which could actually be due to my antique equipment, the laserdisc presentation is as pristine as the day the film was first broadcast. Side One is recorded in CLV, and the very short Side Two (the film is only 74 minutes long) is in CAV—for anyone who would care to freeze-frame on McGavin's puss.

—John E. Payne

**CALL ME BWANA**  
MGM/UA Home Video  
Two Sides CLV  
**\$39.95**

Image Entertainment has unleashed a widescreen laserdisc of Bob Hope's 1963 jungle romp CALL ME BWANA. Thematically, it's reminiscent of the popular Road pictures, which dispatched Hope and Bing Crosby to exotic locales. Hope's on his own for this journey, but still manages to elicit some bona fide titters amid more than a few groans.

The Moon Probe One space capsule has crashed somewhere in the Congo. United States governmental bigwigs forcefully mandate Hope to travel to the Dark Continent in search of the downed capsule before it falls into enemy hands. Hope is the logical choice for this assignment—his bestselling series of adventure books have earned him the public appellation of "Mr. Africa." Trouble is, Hope has never actually been further east than Cape Cod! MAN'S FAVORITE SPORT? (1964) would make use of the same gag, featuring Rock Hudson's portrayal of a fraudulent fishing authority.

Edie Adams, skilled in karate, is appointed to serve as Hope's bodyguard. She gives an energetic performance, although her hairstyle distractingly reminds the viewer of Dr. Joyce Brothers. Lionel Jeffries, Percy Herbert, and Anita Ekberg appear as counterspies working under the auspices of a foreign power planning to sabotage Hope's mission.

Ekberg proves to be the cinema's most credible brilliant scientist since Mamie Van Doren in 1960's SEX KITTENS GO TO COLLEGE.

Hope has been thoughtfully outfitted with cyanide pills, a hand grenade, poisoned needles, and a homing transmitter. Even those precautions, however, cannot protect him from Ekberg's ersatz



© 1963 United Artists

seductive charms. A tribe of cannibals inadvertently derails the enemy agents' scheme. Hope emerges from the shenanigans as a national hero. Best of all, he's acquired plenty of new material for yet another safari volume.

CALL ME BWANA does not aspire to a level of refined sophistication. But there's plenty of trademark humor for Bob Hope enthusiasts. He delivers his signature mannerisms to the letter, including throwaway one-liners laced with double entendres. The arnif-faced comedian maintains a deadpan expression no matter how absurd the dialogue. Hope provides the spiritual glue that solidifies the disparate ensemble of international thespians.

Perusing the picture's credits suggests an alternate title: CALL ME BONDAGE. The first James Bond entry, DR. NO, was created during the same year. CALL ME BWANA was likewise produced by Harry Saltzman and Albert R. Broccoli, and edited by Peter Hunt. The main titles for both productions were designed by Maurice Binder. The titular song "Call Me Bwana" (warbled by Hope and accompanied by a Twist-styled instrumental background) was written by Monty Norman, who allegedly composed the legendary "James Bond Theme."

CALL ME BWANA unspools like a parody of soon-to-be spy film conventions. The American president and Soviet premier are photographed with their faces obscured, a device also engineered in the Bondian depiction of Spectre honchos. The world's major governments are engaged in conflict, resorting to weapons such as exploding champagne, and a church organ masking a "PINKO" communications device. Hope even awakens one night to find a planted poisonous spider crawling up his body. (Another arachnid provided Sean Connery with a rude awakening in DR. NO.)

The film provides a lighthearted frolic, but little of substance. Still, it

may be the finest entry in the minuscule Secret Agent/Jungle High Jinks genre. Admittedly, there are plenty of examples of racist and sexist humor. But the picture is of another time, another place, and is best treated like the early sixties relic it represents.

The laserdisc image is well framed at the 1:85-1 aspect ratio. There's more visual information on the sides than is evident in the videocassette edition. Only the bottom matting seems to abbreviate the original cinematography. The print is free of artifacts and blemishes, although the color tones have faded somewhat from their vintage luster. The sound level of Hope's "Call Me Bwana" tune, which closes the festivities, is audibly fainter than the volume of the remainder of the disc. Maybe that's just as well.

—John F. Black

**NIGHT TIDE**  
**The Roan Group**  
**Two Sides CLV**  
**\$49.98**

NIGHT TIDE (1963) was the first full-length feature by director Curtis Harrington. Harrington began his career by making experimental short films in the fifties. He would later helm such genre offerings as QUEEN OF BLOOD (1966), GAMES (1967), and WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? (also 1971). But 1960 found him launching principal photography for an adaptation of his own short story "Night Tide," to be photographed throughout various amusement parks of Southern California's beach communities.

NIGHT TIDE details the adventures of a young sailor (Dennis Hopper) on shore leave. The sailor encounters a haunting young woman (Linda Lawson) who appears as "Mora the Mermaid" in an aquatic carnival exhibit. The two gradually become fond of one another.

Hopper soon starts receiving warnings about Lawson's mysterious past. Her guardian, the retired Captain Murdock (Gavin Muir), admonishes him that Lawson is descended from an ancient island race of sirens. The woman herself claims to feel "the pull of the sea," as though it

is a fundamental part of her being. Hopper initially ignores the doomsaying by waterfront fortune tellers and other denizens of the seaside pier. His life eventually becomes endangered by a force beyond his control.

NIGHT TIDE offers a palpable maritime atmosphere. The actors were filmed at the Santa Monica Pier, the Pacific Ocean Park, Venice Beach, the Long Beach Pike, and assorted carnival locations. Seamlessly edited together, the segments create a dilapidated oceanside community balancing precariously on a tide of Neptunian nostalgia. This bittersweet environment mirrors the sunbaked Gothicism of the Saltair Pavilion from Herk Harvey's CARNIVAL OF SOULS (1962).

Elements of the film pay homage to forties auteur Val Lewton. Much of the material is suggested, rather than explicitly delineated. The beams of light dancing across the enclosing interior walls of the mermaid grotto are reminiscent of the swimming pool's watery reflections from Lewton's CAT PEOPLE (1942). When Hopper suffers a subsequent nightmare in NIGHT TIDE, the mermaid grotto's flickering lights subliminally decorate his dream. Even when the tale's mystery is climactically revealed, a plot thread is allowed to remain dangling in the breeze.

The modest ensemble players are, for the most part, effective in their roles. Dennis Hopper gives an uncharacteristic portrayal of an earnest, though inexperienced, young man. At the time, Linda Lawson had been a torch singer. Her ability to convey an aura of melancholia is superior to her actual line readings. Luana Anders contributes a down-to-earth wholesomeness as the daughter of the carousel proprietor, cleverly contrasting Lawson's ethereal quality. Gavin Muir is excellent as Captain Murdock. He's affable and suave in appearance. However, his seemingly fatherly advice to Hopper ("At my age, one needs a little stimulant—you'll find that out later on") submerges another context.

The Roan Group's laser presentation of NIGHT TIDE is generally excellent.

The film has been digitally transferred from a 35mm negative, evidencing only the occasional speckling, and a minor blemish or two. The result looks dramatically sharper and clearer than any of the previous VHS renditions. The black-and-white contrast is crisply detailed, a dimension sorely lacking from the videocassette editions. The letterboxed aspect ratio of 1:85-1 adds some detail to the sides of the picture. That is a major plus, given the atmospheric locations

revealed by the cinematography. The improved focus of the image highlights the eclectic artifacts which help define these characters' life-styles.

Curtis Harrington and Dennis Hopper have also contributed a second-audio commentary track. The two men sit together and attempt to replenish each other's recollections of that long-ago production shoot. Their talk is essentially of an anecdotal nature. Considering Harrington's background as an experimental filmmaker, some listeners might have preferred a more technical overview of the film's elements.

Still, the director and the actor are clearly enjoying themselves, as will most of their audience. Hopper is reminded of nearly getting mistakenly busted by MPs for wearing a nonregulation sailor uniform (which had been specifically tinted to achieve the desired cinematic impression). Harrington describes a cordial luncheon at the Brown Derby restaurant with potential financiers. Midway through the meal, he had suddenly deduced that these well-dressed investors were from Mickey Cohen's mob! Ironically, the "money men" never called back. (Perhaps this project wasn't "commercial" enough for them?) The commentary track concludes with an unexpectedly wistful dialogue about the sense of loss resultant from the completion of a film which one has loved creating.

The jacket cover displays a gorgeous color reproduction of original poster art. A one-sheet insert is included inside, containing a black-and-white rendition of the more common release poster. The back of this sheet exhibits several examples of the original pressbook's ballyhoo. The outer jacket contains one error: the billing of supporting actor Gavin Muir as "Glen Muir."

I regret that one of the jacket's chapter-stop titles hints at the surprise ending. Aside from that, this laser package ranks with Roan's finest offerings. The highest compliment I can pay is that I felt I was viewing NIGHT TIDE for the first time, even though I'd seen it many times before.

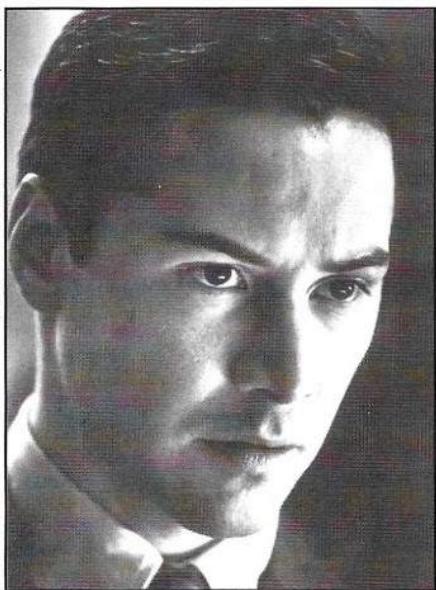
—John F. Black

**THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE**  
**Warner Home Video**  
**Three Side CLV**  
**\$39.95**

In two brilliant strokes of typecasting, Al Pacino plays the Devil and Keanu Reeves plays an idiot.

Reeves portrays Kevin Lomax, a successful defense lawyer stuck in Jerkwater, Florida. Out of the blue, he's handed an opportunity to move to New Yawk City and work for a big law firm run by the transparently named John Milton (Al Pacino). He's given a huge apartment and all the hot cases, and is suddenly on the fast track to the top. Along the way, he and his beautiful wife, Mary Ann (Charlize Theron, the single





bright spot in this dreary enterprise), must endure the overly enthusiastic and not-a-little-scary attentions of the new boss, who sucks them into his social circle and occupies Lomax's every waking moment with both work and play. Left alone most of the time, Mary Ann starts a heartily encouraged slide away from sanity—this with the help of the other neglected wives in the building, who are obviously part of the gaslight agenda.

Lomax's religious-psychic mother (Judith Ivey), who can't even abide people working on a Sunday, sees the evil, but is too crazy to be taken seriously.

This movie hates us. There is very little here for even a hard-core horror-film maven to enjoy. We are dragged through a disconnected series of travails as Lomax is stripped of his humanity for the sake of winning cases. The first hour of the film meanders raggedly with no clear indication of what the hell is going on, yet there is little suspense since we've pretty much figured out most of what's coming. (Hey, we've all seen THE OMEN already). Nevertheless, the movie drags out to 140 minutes what could have been better told in 90.

Throughout the film, pretty, innocent Mary Ann is subjected to so many depressing circumstances, brutalities, and depravities that one feels the need to shower afterward—or during. Reeves, by the way, should never attempt an accent other than his natural surfer-dude slur, since he has yet to maintain one throughout a film. Here, his southern drawl is even more transient than his acting. Admittedly, he has some good moments, but watching Reeves act opposite Pacino is . . . well, like trying to hear Claudine Longet sing a duet with Tom Jones.

The denouement of the film (the last 20 minutes), with Pacino chewing scenery like a starved rottweiler and with all of the plot's cards finally—finally!—on the table, is actually both exciting and

visually stunning. The two hours it takes to reach those last 20 minutes are pure torture—I came very close to giving up. This film is far too long, and far too mean. Even grossness and brutality can be made entertaining by a well-written horror film, but this one just makes it disgusting.

—John E. Payne

**TWICE-TOLD TALES/  
TOWER OF LONDON  
MGM/UA Home Video  
Four Sides CLV  
\$59.95**

TWICE-TOLD TALES (1963) serves up a troika of stories from the pen of Nathaniel Hawthorne (only one of which actually appeared in the author's *Twice-Told Tales* collection). Vincent Price narrates and stars in all three segments.

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" casts Price and Sebastian Cabot as aging gentlemen friends whose playful camaraderie masks a dark secret from long ago. The men accidentally stumble onto a natural method of preserving youth. This very distillation, however, ironically causes their undoing, as their past literally comes to life. The episode's climactic image of a skeleton in a bridal dress was, in 1963, potent enough to prompt an entire theater audience to scream in unison. It's nice to recall a time when such a spectacle could shock unjaded viewers.

"Rappaccini's Daughter" presents Price as a brilliant scientist who has misguidedly "protected" his daughter from worldly corruption (and the boy next door) by injecting plant toxins into her bloodstream. She remains untouchable, until a young suitor forces Price's hand in providing her with a mate.

The concluding segment is based upon Hawthorne's classic novel *The House of the Seven Gables* (previously filmed by Universal in 1940, with Price portraying a different Pyncheon brother). Two feuding New England families are forever linked by a mutual curse and shared secrets. That Hawthornian past, once again, holds dominion over the actions of its descendants.

TWICE-TOLD TALES, while entertaining, suffers in the inevitable comparison with Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe adaptations. The pedestrian direction by Sidney Salkow betrays the film's smallish, set-bound appearance. Rarely do we see more than three characters together. With so few actors parading around such claustrophobic soundstages, the camera rarely moves from a stationary position.

The economy of exhibition focuses attention on Vincent Price and his various roles. The actor successfully underplays Hawthorne's three haunted characters, in contrast with his Poe protagonists for Corman.

Yet, the film still fails to provide a truly cinematic experience. Price's sudden dispatching of his haughty sister

with a pickax during the concluding story represents one of the few moments of kinetic shock. The majority of the movie suggests the ambiance of a filmed stage performance.

The laserdisc displays TWICE-TOLD TALES in an attractive presentation. The lush color is brighter than the earlier videotape release, although flesh tones remain slightly pale. The image has been framed in the 1:66-1 aspect ratio, ironically exposing the limitations of the cramped sets. Price occasionally is cut off at the edge of the screen, suggesting that a ratio of 1:76-1 might have been preferable. The print itself is in good condition, with few discernible artifacts. The analog tracks isolate the romanticallyRichard La Salle score and its accompanying sound effects.

The set's cofeature is the 1962 potboiler TOWER OF LONDON. It is not a remake of the 1939 drama, although it's based on similar background material.

Roger Corman's historical travesty opens with a fog-enshrouded toy castle. Paul Frees' lugubrious narration attempts to punctuate the image with somber shadings, but the miniature model telegraphs the meager budget.

Vincent Price (who appeared as the Duke of Clarence in the earlier film) enacts the hunchback Richard III. The mad monarch ascends to power by personally murdering those who stand in his way. These pathetic souls refuse to roll over and play dead, however. Price becomes haunted by the ghosts of everyone he has eliminated. He can't even commence



a soliloquy without some phantom admonishing him that he will perish "by the hand of a dead man."

The ghosts' communal prophecy finally comes to pass on the bloody field of Bosworth. Price falls onto a battle-ax clutched in the rigor mortis grip of a fallen soldier, thereby snuffing out his reign of terror.

Director Corman struggles to meld Shakespearean and horror film motifs.

There are passages of gruesome torture, as well as the parade of phantoms. Price's hallucination that the castle walls are coming alive suggests Corman's nightmare sequences from the Poe series. A hand even emerges from a crypt in the manner of Myrna Fahey during HOUSE OF USHER.

Vincent Price relishes every opportunity to perform royal scenery-chewing. He initially does appear restrained, a la his Matthew Hopkins from THE CONQUEROR WORM, but as the corpses begin to pile up, his voice snarls and his eyes roll crazily.

TOWER OF LONDON provides as many chortles as thrills. The majority of the battle scenes have been lifted from the 1939 production. These images contrast shamefully with Corman's low-budget inserts of inept hand-to-hand combat. The background score sounds more appropriate to World War II than to medieval England. The supporting cast, including Michael Pate, Sandra Knight, and Joan Freeman, are wasted in cardboard roles.

The laserdisc transfer of TOWER OF LONDON is certainly acceptable. Although it has been modified to fit TV specifications, very little picture information is missing from the sides. The print itself is a shade or two on the dark side, but that may reflect Corman's attempt to camouflage his sparse resources. The resolution seems fine otherwise, with little speckling or distracting artifacts. The music (which sounds more like library music than an actual score) and sound effects have been isolated on the analog channels.

—John F. Black

#### INDEPENDENCE DAY

Fox Home Video

Three Side CLV

\$39.95

As with his previous film, STARGATE (1994), director Roland Emmerich sticks with his formula of spectacle over substance in the box-office hit INDEPENDENCE DAY (1996). There is a little something to be said, though, for the film's epic proportion. After all, even Aristotle listed spectacle as an important element of drama.

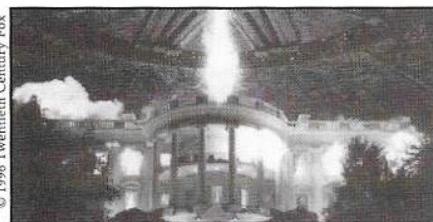
However, it's at the bottom of Aristotle's list. Too bad someone didn't tell Roland Emmerich.

Here's the plot, courtesy of Emmerich and co-screenwriter Dean Devlin. Aliens begin a mass invasion of Earth. The President of the United States (Bill Pullman) and his entourage desperately seek to stop the menace. Through the combined efforts of a military air strike led by the President himself, the astounding genius of a cable TV technician (Jeff Goldblum), the bravado of a pilot (Will Smith), and the ultimate courage of a drunken crop-duster (Randy Quaid), the aliens are defeated and America saves the world.

Close scrutiny reveals the story's sheer idiocy. Example: why are the aliens at-

tacking Earth in the first place? Because they're on a search-and-destroy mission throughout the galaxy, with Earth as just another stop along the way. That's it. More contrivances pop up at every turn, but they're far too numerous to mention here.

One would think that a strong cast could salvage the shallow script, but the performances are dull and uninspired. Bill Pullman, Will Smith (who, astonishingly, receives top billing), Jeff Goldblum, and Judd Hirsch (as Goldblum's father) offer nothing new. Randy Quaid is simply gruesome to watch. Even Robert Loggia looks bored. Furthermore, the



finale becomes an exercise in flag-waving jingoism that would make even John Milius envious. But what's an epic-scale wound without a little salt, eh?

The THX laserdisc is letterboxed at 2.35:1, with a sharp and clear transfer. Compared with the full-frame videocassette, much peripheral information is added here, with only a minimal loss of picture from the top and virtually none from the bottom. While the letterboxing enhances some character scenes done in tight shots, the real payoff comes during Volker Engel's outstanding special effects sequences. The first arrival of the alien ships over the Earth is simply majestic. The Dolby Digital AC-3 soundtrack is also stunning, enhancing everything from the smallest foley effect to the audaciously loud battle sequences.

Judicious use of disc space is a problem here. The double-disc set spreads the film over three sides in CLV format, with Side Four totally blank. Why not have included supplemental material and/or trailers on Side Four? Better still, why not have recorded the entire second disc in CAV format, allowing frame-by-frame analysis of the spectacular effects sequences in the finale? Instead, the only extra offered here is an advance teaser for the next 20th Century Fox effects fiesta: VOLCANO.

—Brooke Perry

#### VOLCANO

Fox Home Video

Two Sides CLV

\$29.95

The subtitle "The Coast Is Toast" sets the tone for this not-to-be-taken-seriously disaster romp. One of the two magma-opuses released in 1997, VOLCANO pretty much dives right into the lava pool with few preliminaries.

We are first introduced to everyone whose lives will soon be in jeopardy: the

director of Los Angeles' Office of Emergency Management, Mike Roarke (Tommy Lee Jones), a workaholic who can't seem to get that vacation started; his teenage daughter Kelly (Gaby Hoffman), who would be knifing victim number one in another type of film; seismologist Amy Barnes (Anne Heche), who thinks something geologically dangerous may be going on under the streets of L.A.—well, something besides that usual sinking into the sea thing; and E.R. doctor Jaye Calder (Jaquelin Kim), who is constantly harassed to quit this nonsense of helping people by her asshole husband (John Corbett).

Without further ado, a volcano erupts out of the La Brea Tar Pits and starts oozing lava down Wilshire Boulevard, burning up shops and museums. Luckily, it happens just as Roarke drives by so he can crisis-manage on his cell phone while his levelheaded second in command (Don Cheadle) coordinates city services back at the command center. Barnes also happens to be on the scene investigating the scalding deaths of sewer workers under MacArthur Park, when the earth opens up and swallows her assistant. (If you can keep from singing a certain Richard Harris song during this scene, you're a better person than I.) Roarke and Barnes find themselves in the center of the disaster and work together to find a way to stop the lava flow before it gets to the residential areas. The script plays lip service to some of L.A.'s social problems, with a black resident enraged over the fire department's apparent lack of interest in protecting his neighborhood, and a hard-ass cop who'd rather arrest the guy than listen to him. Since it's a movie, they all end up working together, rather than battling it out in court.



It wouldn't be any fun if there was only one problem, so another lava flow heads through the subway tunnels. Roarke realizes that it will erupt through the street right in front of Cedar Sinai Hospital, where daughter Kelly has

taken shelter. The movie loses me with the obvious setup of placing Kelly and a little boy she's minding in harm's way by having him wander off toward things we know are about to blow up. Except for that, though, I was happily along for the ride throughout.

The film is presented on a single disk in CLV, in 1.85:1 letterbox format, with Dolby Digital sound. Popcorn not included. But then either are marshmallows, which might go better with this one . . .

—John E. Payne

#### THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

Image Entertainment

Two sides CLV

\$39.95

Film adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories are by no means rare. Often these adaptations share nothing more in common with the story than its title, Universal's *THE BLACK CAT* (1934) and *THE RAVEN* (1935) being excellent examples of adaptations in name only. Conversely, this 1986 made-for-TV adaptation, even with its altered (actually extended) ending and added plot elements, retains a surprisingly strong relationship to Poe's original story. The grotesque murder of two women sets Paris abuzz. The mystery deepens as the police interview witness after witness. In each case, the witness claims to have heard the voices of two men; one definitely French and the other either Italian, German, or Swiss, depending on who is telling the tale. Inspector Auguste Dupin (George C. Scott), forced into impoverished retirement by a jealous police prefect, is induced to take up the case when his daughter Claire's (Rebecca DeMornay) fiancé, Adolphe Le Bon (Neil Dickson), is accused of the murders. Dupin is accompanied on this adventure by Philippe Huron (Val Kilmer), the son of Dupin's closest friend.

Some liberties have definitely been taken with the original story. The subplot of Dupin's daughter and her fiance is pure fabrication. Dupin is considerably younger in the original story and is a friend to, rather than a target of, the police prefect. Yet these liberties are of little consequence in respect to what has been retained. Of great importance is the accuracy of the murder and its attendant circumstances, combined with the logic Dupin uses to solve the case. Kilmer's remarkably restrained performance comes perfectly into play here. Huron's almost filial regard for the aging inspector allows Dupin to hold center stage and provides a focus for his deductions. These are wisely lifted almost intact from the original story, giving the film a very literate feel.

George C. Scott's Dupin appears outwardly as logical, deliberate, and sometimes self-pitying, but an inner force is very apparent, especially when he shakes himself from his self-imposed lethargy. Much more somber than Scott's

highly energetic Sherlock Holmes in 1971's *THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS*, his Dupin works well with this film's darker qualities.

The film immediately establishes and maintains a suitably dire tone. The lighting and richly orchestrated music transforms the Parisian cityscape into a land of unseen dangers. An early sequence has Claire walking through the Paris night and encountering several "buses" in a row, including two involving cats (a nice reference to Val Lewton's 1942 *CAT PEOPLE*). Sets and costumes are quite convincing.

The video, while having good color and saturation, is decidedly grainy. The mono soundtrack is clean and strong. The 92-minute disc contains 24 chapter stops and a perfectly placed side change, but lacks close captioning or any extras.

—Michael Spampinato

#### COUNTESS DRACULA

Image/Hallmark

Two Sides CLV

\$39.99

One of the "later" Hammer films that received scant distribution in the United States was *COUNTESS DRACULA* (1970). It's not hard to see why; the tone is primarily of prurient interest, rather than classic horror.

The story is loosely based on a genuine historical figure. Erzebet (Elizabeth) Bathory was a noblewoman said to be of Hungarian descent. She allegedly tortured and killed hundreds of young women belonging to the servant class (and for her efforts, was once listed in the prestigious *Guinness Book of World Records*).

Although in questionable taste, there wasn't anything remotely supernatural about her activities. Nevertheless, history hasn't been kind to her memory. Certain myths have been attributed to her name, such as the infamous bathing in virgin blood for rejuvenation.

Hammer Films selected that particular myth and made it the basis for their exhibition. *COUNTESS DRACULA* is thus more historical fantasy than true epic.

The film begins with the widow Bathory (Ingrid Pitt) mortified to learn that she must share her estate with her absent daughter (Lesley-Anne Down). But the countess is soon blessed with good fortune. Her attack on a servant girl unexpectedly reveals that spilled virgin blood can restore her youthful appearance.

Pitt maneuvers to have her returning daughter kidnapped. She then impersonates the imprisoned young woman, playing the coquette to attract the attentions of a handsome local nobleman (Sandor Eles). Whenever her youthful countenance fades, Pitt dispatches vari-

ous associates to acquire unwitting donors to her cause.

Eventually, the smitten Eles prepares to marry Pitt, still believing her to be her own daughter. But the wedding ceremony ends disastrously, as Pitt's beauty treatment betrays her monstrous deception. The villagers brand her with the appellation "Countess Dracula" as she awaits execution for her crimes.

*COUNTESS DRACULA* was directed by Peter Sasdy, a Hammer veteran of Hungarian descent. Sasdy also helmed two superior studio releases, *TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA* (1969) and *HANDS OF THE RIPPER* (1971). While those productions offered more classical thrills, *COUNTESS DRACULA* plays rather more like a nudity-ridden episode of *MASTERPIECE THEATER*. The indifferent reactions of Pitt's servants and contemporaries to her carnage are closer to the level of drawing-room comedy than to any shock or reproach. There may be a grain of historical truth in that portrayal, but it doesn't yield a thrilling cinematic experience.

Director Sasdy does manage to provide some glimpses of his craftsmanship. There are several sequences inside the castle that highlight images of candlelight and firelight flickering across walls and corridors. The film's climax is emblematically linked with those of *TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA* and *HANDS OF THE RIPPER*. All three Sasdy projects culminate with the vanquishing of evil within chapel or cathedral walls.

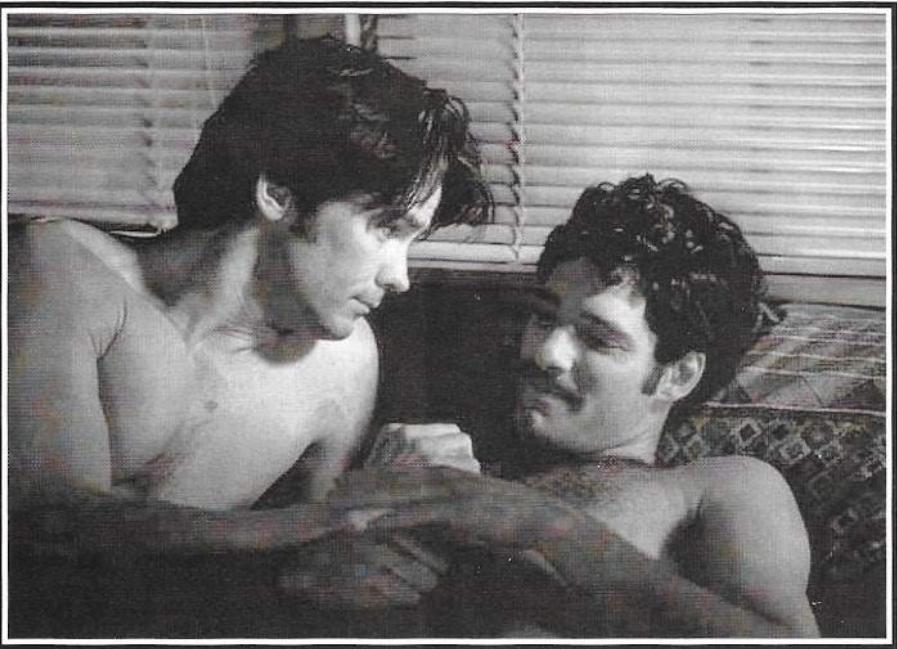
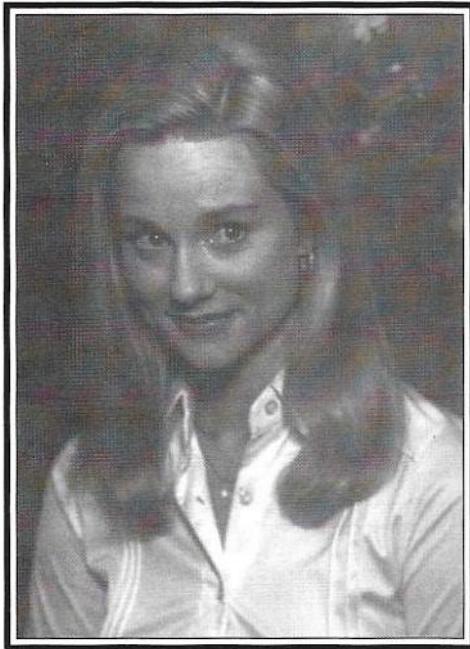
The laser offers the debut of *COUNTESS DRACULA* in an American home video format. The disc's color values are consistent, although the original Eastman Color has slightly faded. The print employed appears to be the fully uncut Continental version, displaying all of the nudity and gore. There are some vertical white print scratches occasionally evident, but most aficionados would presumably prefer the uncut edition to a spotless but censored pressing.

The pictorial image is presented full-frame at 1:33-1, which sacrifices no important visual information. Although

*Continued on page 71*



© 1972, 20th Century-Fox



*As the poets have mournfully sung,  
Death takes the innocent young,  
The rolling in money,  
The screamingly funny,  
And those who are very well hung.*

—W.H. Auden

**D**It was quite the thrill-packed, fingernail-biting cliffhanger. Recently moved from Cleveland to San Francisco, Mary Ann Singleton (Laura Linney) had met nerdy neighbor/private eye/child pornographer Norman Neal Williams (Stanley DeSantis) on the steep cliffs near the Palace of the Legion of Honor—famous for its haunting presence in Alfred Hitchcock’s 1958 masterpiece VERTIGO—and was threatening to expose Mary Ann’s earth-mother landlady, Mrs. Anna Madrigal (Olympia Dukakis), the mystery woman whose name was actually an anagram. Instead, the skittish little man made a slight misstep and plunged feet first into San Francisco Bay, never to be seen again.

Death may take the innocent, the young, the wealthy, the hung, but he had also nabbed poor Norman . . .

Who had hired Norman Neal Williams? What dark secrets had he hoped to reveal? Those questions—and dozens more—were left unanswered at the conclusion of TALES OF THE CITY, the Peabody Award-winning 1993 miniseries produced by Channel Four Films and originally televised on the PBS series AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE. When PBS, bowing (kneeling, practically!) to pressure from religious and conservative groups protesting the show’s disco-era depiction of gay relationships and casual drug use, decided not to proceed with a sequel . . . well, unlike the late Mr. Williams, we were all left hanging.

And hanging.  
And hanging.

Finally, four years later, in the summer of 1997, Showtime came to the rescue and MORE TALES OF THE CITY, the second of Armistead Maupin’s six novels about life at 28 Barbary Lane (all but the last initially published as a daily serial in The San Francisco Chronicle), began filming. Twelve months later, in June 1998, the six-episode mini-series premiered to the wild cheers of fans and the vast relief of the author. Not one to sit quietly on the sidelines, Maupin had been with director Pierre Gang all the way.

“I was everywhere!” Maupin laughed during a recent call to Scarlet Street. “Drove him crazy, poor guy. In a story like this, there are a lot of ways the ‘i’s’ have to be dotted. There’s not only the period authenticity to be concerned about, there’s also the gay authenticity and specific readings of certain lines that could have been lost on a French Canadian director. Pierre is a wonderful filmmaker, but there were idiomatic issues that arose. I was always very tactful about suggesting line readings, though, and I never did it in front of the actors. The director maintained his autonomy. It involved a certain amount of diplomacy, but Pierre was wonderfully receptive to it.”

Returning to their CITY roles for the sequel were original cast members Linney, Dukakis, Bill Campbell (as Dr. Jon Fielding), Barbara Garrick (as DeDe Halcyon Day), Thomas Gibson (as Beauchamp Day), and Parker Posey (as Connie Bradshaw). New to the mix were Paul Hopkins (replacing Marcus D’Amico as Michael Tolliver), Nina Siemaszko (replacing Chloe Webb as Mona Ramsey), Whip Hubley (subbing for Paul Gross as Brian Hawkins), Francoise Robertson (in for Cynda Williams as D’orothea Wil-

# Spellbound in San Francisco Armistead Maupin’s More Tales of the City

Text and Interview by Richard Valley

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*"I'm a devout disciple of Alfred Hitchcock. He affected my storytelling more heavily than any literary influence. Certainly I was trying to do Hitchcock one better when I had Brian naked, looking out his apartment window with binoculars, and the naked lady he was looking at was looking back . . . ."*

son), and Diana Leblanc (replacing Nina Foch as Frannie Halcyon). Maupin welcomed them all, old and new.

"At first I thought it would be difficult to adjust to new actors, but they brought their own nuances to the roles. And because I see those characters as people who are somewhat different from anyone who has played them, it wasn't a problem for me. These were different spins. Chloe's Mona was a quirkier character, but Nina brings a certain earthiness that I've always imagined being part of Mona's persona. She's more of a 'no makeup' kind of gal than Chloe was in the part. Paul Hopkins, especially in his serious scenes, has this wonderful way of 'letting you in' that I find especially applicable to Michael. And he has the mustache. Michael has always been described as having a mustache, and I was always a little disappointed that Marcus D'Amico wasn't able to grow one. Marcus more than made up for it in every other regard, and Paul certainly wasn't hired for his mustache. He read for the role without one."

According to Maupin, one of the trickiest roles to cast was the foulmouthed, golden-hearted madam known as Mother Mucca. "I was very nervous about casting that character, because frankly it's an over-the-top role as it's written. Mother Mucca began as a kind of visual joke in the newspaper, because I wasn't allowed to use her favorite word in print. Every time she said 'fucking' we had to put a dash in, and that in itself created visual comedy. But when we actually got around to having an old lady use that word, I was afraid that without the right old lady it might be too much to take. The beauty of Jackie Burroughs' performance is that, no matter how crusty she is, she always conveys this tender heart."

The whorehouse scenes with Mona and Mother Mucca are among the most licentious and irreligious in *MORE TALES OF THE CITY*, but they don't stand alone. The entire cast was met with sequences that pushed the sexual

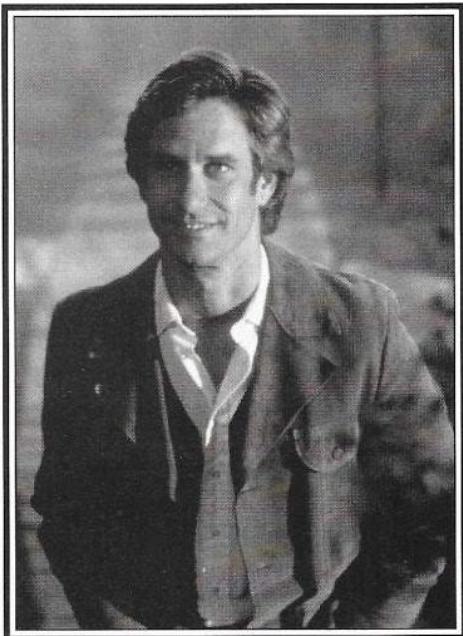
envelope—and threatened to push protester's panic buttons—even further than had the first production.

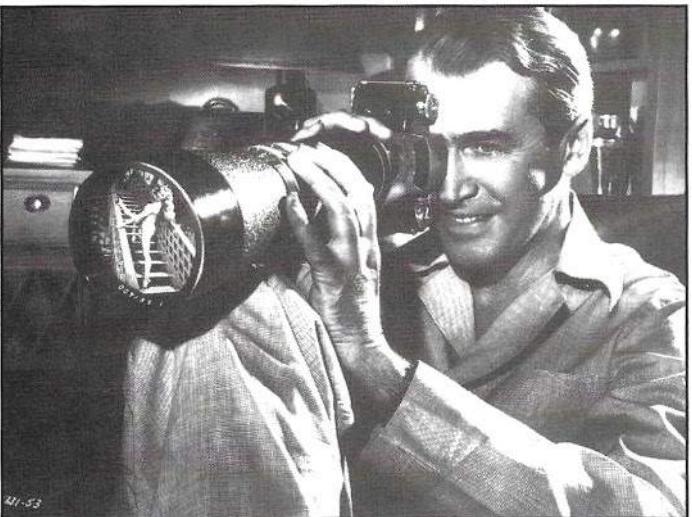
"The story of *MORE TALES OF THE CITY* is much, much racier than the story of *TALES OF THE CITY*, but we didn't have any trouble," enthused Maupin. "I'm that rare creature, the author who has no call to bitch about what was done to his work. The nude scene between Bill Campbell and Paul Hopkins was completely amenable to the actors. Billy, bless his heart, called me after the final cut was in and asked how that scene went, and I said it went fine, that the nudity was very casual and matter of fact. He said, 'Good. That's what I was going for—graceful dickage.' So that's become a new term in our vocabulary—all we really want is graceful dickage."

Explicit nudity was inevitable, given the salacious subplot inspired by another Hitchcock classic: 1954's *REAR WINDOW*. In a bow to that wickedly voyeuristic thriller, Barbary Lane tenant Brian Hawkins and the mysterious "woman in the window" of a nearby apartment building lock binocular lenses and indulge in some long-distance autoeroticism. (How's that for a television first?)

"It was very daunting to film that scene," recalled Maupin, "and it gave us our only real trouble. The naked lady refused to do frontal nudity when she showed up on the set. I don't know why she was so pissy about that, considering how much of her we do see, but she insisted on wearing a g-string. So Stephane, our costumer—a really sweet gay boy from Montreal—was required to paint pubic hair on the G-string with a magic marker. That and a little post-production magic created the semblance of full-frontal nudity."

Happily, there were no problems, sartorial or otherwise, with the new Brian on the block. "I was delighted with Whip Hubley's performance. He made a potentially unsympathetic—task—rather sympathetic. You don't think he's a complete lunatic by the end of the series, and that's





PAGE 28 LEFT: Mary Ann Singleton (Laura Linney) plays at being Ingrid Bergman in Armistead Maupin's MORE TALES OF THE CITY. Page 28 RIGHT: Jon Fielding and Michael Tolliver (Bill Campbell and Paul Hopkins) are re-united in time to curl up with a good mystery—and one another. PAGE 29 LEFT: Brian Hawkins (Whip Hubley) helps Mary Ann pack for a romantic ocean cruise. PAGE 29 RIGHT: Like every good landlady, Mrs. Madrigal (Olympia Dukakis) is a woman with a secret. ABOVE: MORE TALES OF THE CITY borrows plot points and character names from such Alfred Hitchcock classics as REAR WINDOW (1954, with James Stewart), STRANGERS ON A TRAIN (1951, with Farley Granger and Robert Walker, and VERTIGO (1958, with Stewart and Kim Novak).

kind of a challenge with a character who's been jerking off for six hours."

When TALES OF THE CITY aired back in 1993, *Scarlet Street* showcased interviews with Maupin, Campbell, and D'Amico. At the time, we were chastised for devoting so much space to a show seemingly outside our purview, even though Campbell had starred as THE ROCKETEER in 1991 and D'Amico was then getting raves on Broadway in the J.B. Priestley "detective play" AN INSPECTOR CALLS. In fact, Maupin's work is steeped in mystery and horror elements, and the REAR WINDOW variation, like the vertiginous scene at the Palace of Honor, is but one of many references in the *Tales* books to the late, lamented Master of Suspense, Sir Alfred Hitchcock.

"I'm a devout disciple of Hitchcock," Maupin confessed. He affected my storytelling more heavily than any literary influence. There was a direct homage to VERTIGO in the first series on the part of the director, Alistair Reed, who is also a big fan of Hitchcock. We tried to be more oblique about it this time around, because I think a story should stand on its own. I hate homages when they're in any way copied from the original. Certainly, though, I was trying to do Hitchcock one better when I had Brian naked, looking out his apartment window with binoculars, and the naked lady he was looking at was looking back!"

In addition to VERTIGO and REAR WINDOW, alert Hitchcockians will find a subtle reference in the miniseries to STRANGERS ON A TRAIN, the 1951 film in which Robert Walker brilliantly played Bruno Anthony, a psychotic killer who murders Farley Granger's wife. "It's no accident that the man Beauchamp Day hires to 'take care of his wife' is named Bruno, but not everyone will notice that the first time around. The thing I love about Hitchcock is that not a frame goes by that doesn't contain an amazing discovery that you make on the third or fourth viewing. We tried to do that with MORE TALES."

Then there's the Catholic director's lifelong obsession with religion. "All those scenes taking place in the church are heavily inspired by Hitchcock. When you think about it, he made an awful lot of movies in which the characters end up in a dire situation in a church: THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT, FAMILY PLOT, and, again, VERTIGO.

"In fact, the religious theme that runs throughout the entire series is perhaps the most pervasive thing of all. There's the mass at the church, of course, but the real mass is celebrated back at Barbary Lane. Michael and Jon and Mary Ann and Mona are all sitting on the bench in the courtyard and Michael passes around a pound cake that his mother sent. At one point, Michael hands the plate to Mona and says, 'Here. Take. Eat.' That's a direct line from the Episcopal ceremony. The actual wine is drunk one scene earlier, when Mona and Mrs. Madrigal are at the Savoy Tivoli. Mrs. Madrigal asks if she can have a sip, and she takes Mona's wine and drinks from it."

Like all the novels in the series, MORE TALES OF THE CITY is episodic, following its characters through a dizzying series of romantic and often chaotic adventures. Toward the conclusion, though, MORE TALES begins to focus on one particular plot thread involving Mary Ann and Burke Andrew (a new character played by Colin Ferguson), and again it is to Hitchcock that Maupin turned for inspiration—specifically, to SPELLBOUND, the 1945 film in which Gregory Peck played an amnesiac murder suspect cured and cleared by lovelorn psychiatrist Ingrid Bergman.

"In fact, there's an internal joke in the film just before Mary Ann gets her first kiss from Burke on the ship," Maupin laughed, relishing the memory. "She says she's disappointed that sea cruises aren't what they were in the movies, with daffy dowagers and stowaways in steamer trunks. She says, 'Nobody gets to be Ingrid Bergman any

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Down These Mean Streets

# Lawrence Tierney

interviewed by  
Rick McKay

**L**ate one night, as I was channel surfing, I found myself engrossed in a film called *BORN TO KILL*. I was already a big fan of *film noir*, but I had somehow never seen this picture. The leading man was an actor named Lawrence Tierney. I vaguely remembered him as the actor who had played *DILLINGER*, although I had never seen that film either. But, shortly after *BORN TO KILL* started, I realized instantly that there was a remarkable charisma in both the persona and the characterization of this actor. In one scene, Claire Trevor and Tierney admit to each other how they felt looking at two bloodied corpses. The scene is simultaneously hypnotic, seductive, and unsettling to watch. It is easy to see why the film was considered "too mean spirited" in 1946, and why it has reached cult status today.

What was not easy to understand was why I had not heard of Lawrence Tierney since. I did a little homework and was shocked to find that he was the grizzled old tough guy, Joe, of Quentin Tarantino's *RESERVOIR DOGS*. He was the glue that held the story together. The film opens up with a scene in a diner. Tierney is head of the caper and remains pivotal throughout the story. Why, I wondered, had I not seen him in anything in between? Or had I?

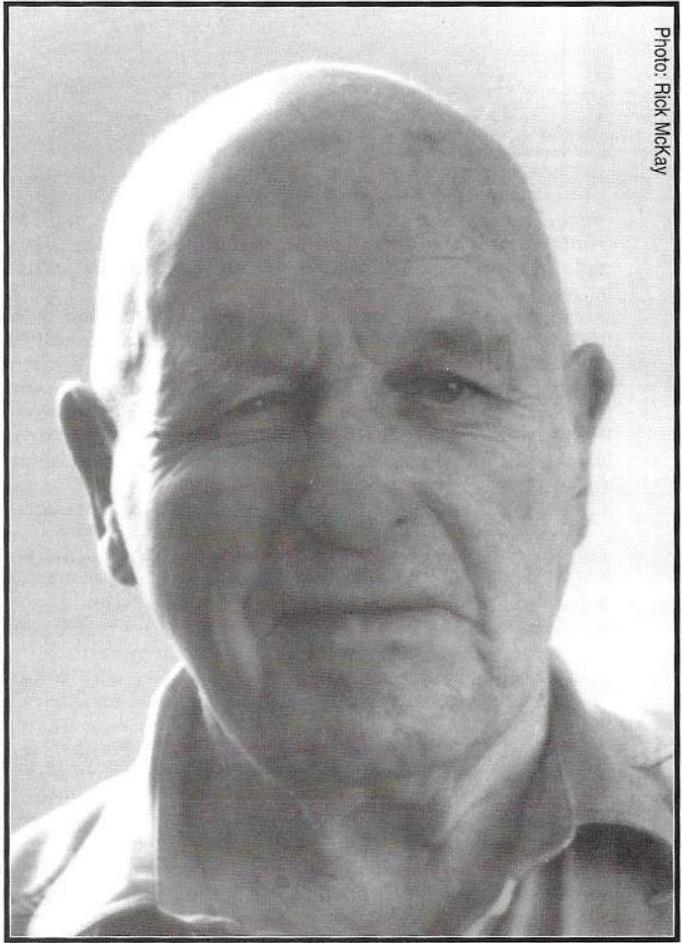


Photo: Rick McKay



Further research showed that Lawrence Tierney had had a legendary fall from triumph almost 50 years earlier. On top of the world after DILLINGER, when he was only 26 years old, he found himself in trouble. As his agent Don Gerler told me, "This Irish guy from Brooklyn suddenly had fame, women, parties, booze, and the rest. And he had an Irish temper, too. Look at the other Irish and Welsh actors; Richard Burton, Richard Harris—hell, Peter O'Toole is lucky to be alive! Larry went the same route—but harder."

In the forties, Larry began to be arrested for public intoxication, fighting, and drunken driving—all while working at the studios and making big films. Evidently, since he was playing a tough guy, he could get away with it, as there was no "image" to be ruined. If anything his image was enhanced. In 1950, THE BODYGUARD, cowritten by Robert Altman, even took advantage of Tierney's reputation by including references to his drinking and fighting. But, soon he pushed the envelope too far. Papers around the country published photos of him barefoot and in straps being taken to a "neurological hospital." There were more arrests for drunken driving. He

took sanctuary from the police at one point in a Santa Monica church. In 1952, he played a small part in THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH and the director, Cecil B. DeMille, took a great liking to him and asked for him to be put under contract at Paramount. But, while Tierney's contract was being negotiated, someone started a fight with him in a bar and he was arrested again. The contract was dropped. He was all of 33 years old and his career was virtually finished. In 1954, he played his last leading role in Hollywood. A film called FEMALE JUNGLE, it was a low-budget indy with John Carradine and Jayne Mansfield. Fiction was imitating fact, as Tierney played a police detective who was such a violent drinker that he may have blacked out and killed his wife. There was not much work coming. The Brooklyn native headed back east.

The next few decades were full of trouble. When he was arrested in August of 1955, a paper proclaimed that Tierney had been arrested 16 times, more often than Dillinger. And he was just getting started. Over the years to come he was charged many more times for "fracturing a man's jaw," "knocking down a woman's door," "being stabbed

in an Amsterdam Avenue bar brawl," "drunken driving," "hitting a cop," "breaking a college student's jaw with his foot," "breaking into a woman's apartment and slugging her boyfriend the same day that Tierney's mother committed suicide" . . . All of these were reported widely on the covers of cheap tabloids. Tierney was bouncing from "day jobs in construction" and "living in a rented room in the Bronx" to "driving a hansom cab in Central Park" and "living in abandoned buildings."

Needless to say, I was fascinated. In the last decade, Tierney had made a turnaround and been brilliant in the Tarantino film, had been Elaine's father on SEINFELD, had played a character on THE SIMPSONS, had worked with such directors as Tarantino, John Huston, and John Sayles, and had appeared in a slew of commercials and TV films, even playing Joey Buttafuoco's dad in a movie of the week. And somehow he was still getting in trouble. "He's sober now, but just a few years back I was still bailing him out of jail," Gerler admitted. "I had to put my house up for collateral once to put up bail when he got in a fight in a bar. He was 75 years old and still the toughest guy in the bar. What could I

do? Let him sit in jail? But, I like him, and even more importantly, he has that amazing talent. I wouldn't have put up with this shit if he didn't have that talent. He's a Brando, except for the money he gets paid. He's had three chances. The forties after DILLINGER, the seventies when he went from TV show to TV show and then went nuts again—and now." I couldn't help but think three times lucky. Or hope so, anyway. So, the rabble rouser was sober and busy working. I thought this would be the perfect time to interview him.

Friends had heard stories and warned me to be careful when I met Tierney. "Don't take him anywhere that serves liquor or you will end up being thrown out. People in New York are still talking about his drinking nights with George C. Scott; you better watch it!" When I got to LA, I called Tierney directly and got the famous voice on the phone. He sounded like a combination of sandpaper and salt, with a Brooklyn accent. He was low key and polite and we set up a day and time. "Good luck, kid," he said as he signed off. Little did I know . . .

It was a hot August day when I set off from my hotel on Sunset Boulevard and headed towards the ocean and Venice Beach. I did not have an easy time finding his apartment. I drove in circles till I finally arrived, sweating and nervous that I would be late. Before me was a two-story, eight apartment unit with the stairway and halls outside. To say the structure had seen better days would be too kind. The paint was peeling and the stairway rattled as I made my way up to the exposed second-floor hallway. Tierney's screen door was permanently ajar and the only thing that kept it from crashing noisily each time it blew open was the piece of black rubber tied around the hallway's metal railing. A handwritten sign was attached with black electrical tape to the front door, asking one to "knock loudly" on the hollow, plywood portal.

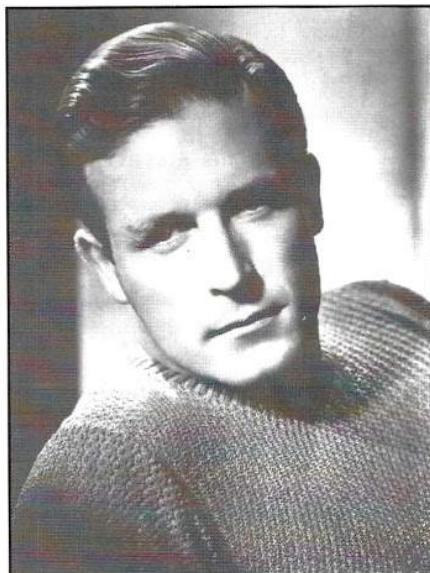
I knocked loudly, but there didn't appear to be anyone at home. I waited. I knocked again. I sat in my steaming rental car. I went back. No luck. I was sure I had the wrong address. That would make sense of the dilapidated apartment building. I checked my road map, then reread the address and the newspaper I had already finished. Finally, after an hour and a half, I was sure that I had written something down incorrectly and Lawrence Tierney, the tough guy, was sitting somewhere in another apartment, incensed that I dared to be this late. I decided to call his agent. He asked if I had the address right. Had I knocked loudly? Repeatedly? He tried Tierney and got no answer, either. Only an answering machine. "I hope he's not lying there dead in that hot apartment," Gerler said. Now, I was really worried.

When I got back, little had changed, still no answer at the door. It was now well over two hours since we had been due to meet. I knocked on a door next to Tierney's and a young woman in bare feet and love beads appeared. I felt like

it was 1969 again. "Oh, Larry?" she asked. "He lives there, but he's not home. I saw him leave around noon. There's his car, but he doesn't drive anyway; some girl was driving him in her car." I asked her how he was these days. "Oh, his legs bother him sometimes, but he's a wild one!" She gave me a knowing glance that made me think that her answer was much more comprehensive than my question warranted.

I went back to the now sweltering rental car and waited. I looked around at the small street off Venice Boulevard. We were a good mile from the beach, the asphalt was cracked on the sidewalks, there were little bungalows in need of fresh paint, but this must have once been a lovely little neighborhood. It was still not bad, but not quite what I had expected.

I went to knock one more time before I left. It had now been three hours and I



had written a note to put on the bad guy's door. I heard a car door slam. There was the hitchhiker from THE DEVIL THUMBS A RIDE getting out of his latest lift. He was much taller than I had expected, and fitter, too. The slight limp threw me off. He could have been anywhere from 60 to 80, but who knew? As he worked his way up the stairs, I said hello and introduced myself.

*Scarlet Street: Hello! I was worried about you. I've been here three hours waiting. Are you okay?*

**Lawrence Tierney:** Oh, yeah. How are you? 'Scuse me, let me get this door open.

I looked behind Tierney and saw a young, pretty brunette woman. Her name was Elizabeth and, as it turned out, she knew someone who knew Tierney and had come from Texas to do a documentary about him for a film-school project. She was staying in the spare bedroom of his apartment. She raised her shoulders and eye brows as she conspiratorially shook her head, smiling as she saw my confusion. It was

clear she was having a similar afternoon. Tierney had still not even acknowledged our appointment or his having missed it. I guess he figured if I was still there he hadn't missed it yet. I followed him into the apartment. In spite of his young house guest, things were pretty much a wreck. Not a disheveled wreck, more like a college student kind of wreck. He was taking "bachelor pad" to new depths. This was, without question, a lived in apartment.

I explained to Larry that I still hoped we could do the interview.

**LT:** Hell, let's go somewhere then. You drive. What kind of car you got? You know Venice? C'mon. Let's go—hurry up!

I was stunned. He had just gotten up the long stairs and was still winded, and suddenly his house guest/documentarian was grabbing things and Tierney was yelling to move it and we were doing the whole scene in reverse. One of us was holding the door, one trying to help him and being rebuffed—and next thing you know we were all on our way. As we drove along, I had a chance to look at Tierney. His six foot, three inch frame barely fit in the seat. He was in a sports shirt and khakis and looked tougher than ever. White, short cropped hair and a face that made the weathered apartment building look new in comparison. If I had ever had any question what "character" looked like in a face, I didn't now.

We finally settled down in a Venice Beach bookstore/café, where the legendary film noir icon was well known. As the interview began, Tierney turned "on." He spoke like a boxer—shooting answers out as if he had a water pistol at a fair and only so much time to fill the tower before the opponent next to him won.

**LT:** Okay, I'm ready. How long will this take? Five minutes? Listen, if I don't want to say anything about anyone, don't push me, okay?

**SS:** No problem. You worked with Val Lewton pretty early in your career, on GHOST SHIP.

**LT:** One of the nicest men I ever met in my life! One of the most talented, too. And one of the most sensitive men, who really knew the business. He kept RKO studios alive when they were going down the drain. He came in with his really strange pictures; he was taking a way-out look at things, you know? And he would conjure up an idea and write screenplays that were not along the general trendy lines that were usually taken. He was a wonderful guy and made wonderful films like his CAT PEOPLE pictures with Simone Simon. He saved RKO and all he got was . . . aww, forget it. I remember he liked to buy things from catalogues. He used to go through the Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogues. He used to say it was like "sending myself presents." He would see something coming in the



**LEFT:** One of Lawrence Tierney's earliest film roles was for producer Val Lewton in **THE GHOST SHIP** (1943). Tierney is pictured with stars Richard Dix and Russell Wade. **RIGHT:** Another tough guy role for tough guy Tierney in **SAN QUENTIN** (1946).

mail and get excited. He used to say he knew he had seen me before. He would ask me where he had seen me and I'd say I don't know. "Well, have you even been to California?" I'd tell him no and ask him if he had been to New York, and he'd say "No, very little." Finally, one day he said, "Wait a minute! I figured out where I had seen you before! C'mon, come up." I went to his studio and there were all these pictures torn out of the Sears Roebuck catalogue, and they were all me when I was modeling for them!

*SS: Anything else about Lewton?*

**LT:** Val Lewton was a thinker. But, he was hated by a lot of people. His own Semitic crowd hated him. He was a sensitive man, but he would stand behind a great actor and scream at him. Power. On this one day, my father went with me to the set and we were trying to find my dressing room. Now, sometimes they put you in this little canvas thing they would build just off the set, like a tent—but I didn't even have one of those. Turns out I was way down out of the way, so the limo drove us down to find somewhere for me to change and

get into my makeup. And on the way back, Val Lewton sees me and screams, "You get out of that car! What in the fuck do you think you are doing?" Now my father was next to me and he had been a chief of police and even he was shocked. My temper got me and I jumped out and grabbed Lewton and said, "Listen, you keep your mouth shut or I'll knock you out right now!" Now, nobody talked to Val Lewton like that. Suddenly he turned white and crumbled up and said, "Now, quiet down. Let's just do the film, okay?"

*SS: That's what you get when you pick on John Dillinger. How did you feel about starring in DILLINGER? The film has become legendary.*

**LT:** Sure, my third picture and my first leading role.

*SS: You made DILLINGER and BORN TO KILL in the same year. How was Robert Wise, who directed BORN TO KILL?*

**LT:** He was all right. Claire Trevor was all right, too, I guess. Do you like her?

*SS: Well, she's a great screen actress, but they say she's a tough cookie and that she has the first nickel she ever made.*

**LT:** I will not say anything bad about her; therefore, I will not say anything at all.

*SS: Do you ever watch your old films when they're on TV?*

**LT:** Those movies conjure up memories for me, memories of who I worked with and who was with me and was it worth it. Sometimes it's better to forget.

*SS: Elisha Cook Jr. was also in BORN TO KILL.*

**LT:** Well, he was good. He was a good actor—easy to work with and I liked working with him. We became good friends, too. We used to go hunting in the High Sierras on the mountain tops. We went elk hunting. He liked elk hunting better than deer hunting, because the elk is much better than deer or venison, which are gamey. Elk is like a good steak. We would go trout fishing, too. And I loved his wife, Peggy. Wonderful person. She died before him. Jesus, it's warm in here, isn't it?

I disconnected Larry's wiring and we moved tables, tape recorder, coffee cups, cakes, and company to a new

**LEFT:** Cleverly disguised as Bud Abbott, Lawrence Tierney makes a break for freedom in **SAN QUENTIN**. **RIGHT:** Tierney was on the lam again in **KILL OR BE KILLED** (1950), a cheap jungle thriller.



table that was out of the sun and under a fan.

**LT:** I liked Elisha, but my favorite in *BORN TO KILL* was the old woman who ran the boarding house. Her name was Esther Howard and she was absolutely fantastic. All the way through the film, she was wonderful. And very nice. In the movie studios back then, in the corner, you would have a big urn of coffee. You'd pour your own and it was usually good coffee. The first day that I saw her, she came in with her own big thermos bottle. I said, "What's wrong, don't you like our coffee? We have all the coffee you can drink over there in that big urn and you bring your own." And she said, "Oh, this isn't coffee. It's martinis!" She had a whole day load of martinis with her every day on the film.

**SS:** Then it was a perfect character for her to play, except that she drank cold beers out of the bottle in *BORN TO KILL*.

**LT:** She was a wonderful person.

**SS:** *THE DEVIL THUMBS A RIDE* is becoming a real cult film, too. Did you ever dream that would happen when you were making it?

**LT:** No, I didn't like it at all. See, I resented all those pictures that they put me in. I never thought of myself as that kind of guy. I thought of myself as a nice guy who wouldn't do rotten things. But obviously that miserable son of a bitch in the film would! I hated that character so much, but I had to do it for the picture.

**SS:** Well, that brings me to something that doesn't have to do with a film. Did you get the birthday card I sent you? And the story about Betsy?

**LT:** Betsy von Furstenberg? Yeah.

**SS:** Did I tell you yet how we came to talk about you?

**LT:** No.

**SS:** Well, I was trying to find you and not having any luck. I was getting ready to give up. Then I had dinner with the stage actress Betsy von Furstenberg one night and she mentioned that she used to be in Hollywood at Metro in the late forties or early fifties. I asked if she had ever heard of you and got quite a surprise. She was in love with you, is that right?

**LT:** (winks) Everyone that ever met me has been in love with me.

**SS:** Betsy said she helped you get the role of Duke Mantee in the road company of *PETRIFIED FOREST*. Evidently she was engaged to Franchot Tone and they were going on tour with it together. She pushed for you and you ended up stealing the show. She said you were a natural, with a God-given, brilliant stage presence. When you were on the stage, no one even saw her or Franchot.

**LT:** (wistful, but still tough) I was good. But, the money was in the movies.

**SS:** She said that you taught her everything about acting while she was on the road with you, that you were self-taught and knew all of Shakespeare and . . .

**LT:** Aww, c'mon! What's she doing now, Betsy?

**SS:** She's widowed, still beautiful, and is starting to sing. It's something she always wanted to do. You should give her a call.

**LT:** Yeah, yeah . . . where do you live in New York?

**SS:** Upper West Side. You have a reputation for living a wild life, but Betsy tells stories of you sitting up with her all night long on the road and getting her off the drugs that MGM had gotten her on. You changed her life.

**LT:** Hmm. (Picks up tape recorder.) I had one just like this. Cost me about two and a half.

**SS:** You have good memories of Betsy?

**LT:** Oh, yeah.

**SS:** She said you really shook her up. She was engaged to Franchot Tone, but after that tour she never married him.

At this Larry shrugged his shoulders and looked out the window of the café onto the streets of Venice. I gave up on Betsy and decided to try and steer back to film . . .



**SS:** One of the directors you worked with in recent years is Quentin Tarantino, for *RESERVOIR DOGS*.

**LT:** Another bad guy role. Tarantino is all right. Very full of himself. As you have probably heard from a lot of other people, too.

**SS:** What did you think of the finished film?

**LT:** I thought it was okay. I can't knock it, right? What the hell . . .

**SS:** It's helped make you a legend. The internet is full of fans who have created a Lawrence Tierney cult. How does that feel?

**LT:** How does that feel? Can't you and I do a film together and collect on that? On the strength of that, wouldn't you think we could get a film produced?

**SS:** I would think you could do anything you want. Young people are crazy about you.

**LT:** Well, tell them I said not to smoke. You are ruining your lungs if you smoke.

**SS:** Larry, you have quite a story. You couldn't write this stuff.

**LT:** Write it? Hell, you couldn't live it! Now, let's get the hell outta here . . .

It was clear that the interview was over. Dillinger had had enough. We

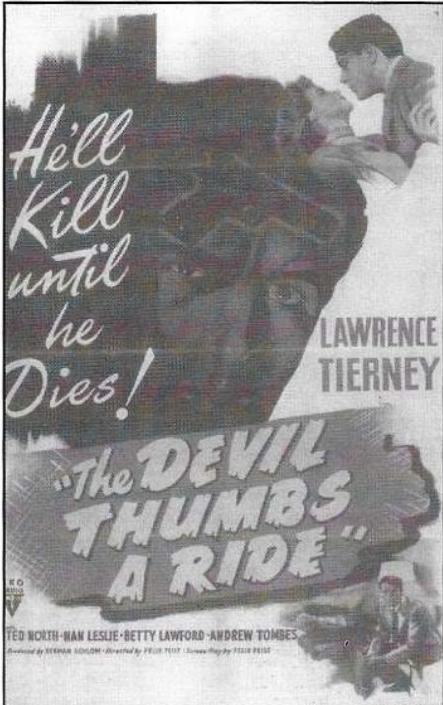
drove back as he looked out the window. I didn't want to bother him, so I asked the documentarian questions and we talked about film. This did not sit well with Tierney, either. If he doesn't talk, nobody talks. He didn't, oddly enough, ever seem really rude, just as if he were operating on his own set of rules. We agreed to meet in a few days and go to lunch on our own.

I made the return drive to Venice with much anticipation. I had put the last interview and the three hour wait behind me. I was ready for a true "one on one" with the star of *BORN TO KILL* and *RESERVOIR DOGS*. When I arrived at his Venice abode, I was surprised to find that not only were we not alone, but we were in a small entourage. Lawrence's nephew, filmmaker Michael Tierney, was there in jeans and a white t-shirt. Elizabeth the documentarian was still around, but now her director of photography was also present—and also staying in the apartment. Soon I realized that all five of us were going to lunch—camera, sound equipment, and all. I decided to make the best of it. Next, I realized that we couldn't all fit in one car. Before I knew it I was driving alone and following the car in front of me, the one filled with people and cameras. I wasn't sure what had happened, but I could tell I was not going to get very much that day.

We ate lunch, which is not a social activity for Larry. The most he says is "pass the butter" or "what did you order?" The rest of us talked. The bill came and suddenly I was buying lunch for five. Larry was tired and my interview had bitten the dust. I was hot, I was grouchy, I was leaving Los Angeles the next day and I did not have enough for a story. What could I do? Larry told me to call him when I came back and we would hang out. "Good luck, kid."

The funny thing is, I was more fascinated than ever. I could see there was a deep intelligence in there. No one around him seemed to be looking for it, but perhaps that was one of his demons. The tough guy thing was definitely a real part of him, but there was more. I wondered if he had this effect on everyone. Probably. I also wondered if it was worth going back to interview him again. His agent Gerler told me that Larry "could have been one of the great ones. Another Brando. There is still no one like him. Who is that tough with that energy at almost 80? And who can act like that? He's like George C. Scott, Lee Marvin, and the other great ones—you know what they're thinking on screen before they say it. Who else is left like that?" I knew he was right. I also knew I would go back and interview him again. Good luck, kid, I thought to myself.

When I got back, Larry had a new apartment that his nephew Michael had procured for him. It was in the heart of old Hollywood. Not far from Hollywood's oldest restaurant, Musso and Frank's—and a stone's throw from the new movies on Sunset and Hollywood



LEFT: THE DEVIL THUMBS A RIDE (1947) on this one-sheet reproduced from *Crime Scenes: Movie Poster Art of the Film Noir*. RIGHT: One of Lawrence Tierney's favorite costars was Elisha Cook Jr. They're pictured here (along with Marc Lawrence, Right) in DILLINGER (1945).

Boulevards. I remembered why Los Angeles was what Orson Welles called "six thousand suburbs in search of a city." You could be on the gaudiest street in America on one block, turn a corner and suddenly be in what looked like a tree-lined street in small town Ohio. Tierney lived in neither. He was nestled a few blocks from both, on a street chock-a-block with apartment buildings dating from the twenties to the nineties. The City of Angels at its most cross-pollinated. One apartment building after another. Old next to new. A one-story Spanish cul de sac that looked as if Bogie and Gloria Grahame might come sneaking out, protecting their noirish eyes from the relentless Hollywood sun. Next door, a bi-level, seen-better-days building with peeling paint that looked like it should be sitting in the middle of the Mojave Desert. Every structure was pastel or beige, but then so were the natives. In between the old dwellings were crammed big, tall, brand new buildings boasting underground gated parking, concierges, and swimming pools on the roofs.

Tierney's pad was in a thirties building that had been recently renovated. I wondered if contract players from Paramount lived there when it was new—or if cowboys hung out while waiting for work at the nearby Poverty Row studios or Gower Gulch. It was a quiet building, a great place for Dillinger to hide out while he planned his next move.

I was invited to Larry's 79th birthday party on a Sunday afternoon. His nephew Michael greeted me at the door.

**Michael Tierney:** Hey, welcome! We're all watching Larry on TV. C'mon in.

It was a modern apartment inside. Nice and clean. Worlds away from what Larry was living in in Venice. The walls of the living room were full of memorabilia. Bronzed plaques from film festivals around the country. A great poster from DILLINGER with the caption: "His story is written in bullets, blood and blondes." The guests were all young and seemed to be friends of Michael. Also present were Michael's cousin, who is Larry's nephew and actor Scott Brady's son. He was blonde and attractive in an average Joe kind of way. There was an actor who did TOUGH GUYS DON'T DANCE with Larry—and the rest, totaling 10 or so, were all watching TV when I entered. Larry was seated at the dining room table, holding court. The table was part office, with phone and phone books near by, and part dining room, with plates and silver. He was smack dab between the kitchen and the living-room television, so he could work the remote control for the TV and almost, but not quite, reach the refrigerator without getting up. I could see that it was almost too convenient for the tough guy to get very comfortable and just a bit lazy in his new Hollywood pad.

Larry looked up and waved absently. I was sure he had no idea who I was. There were no chairs available and I saw Michael and a few other guests in the kitchen. It looked like a good place to disappear until I figured out what was going on. I soon realized we were all watching something that looked like a Civil War drama on television. It had an early sixties kind of look to it.

**MT:** It's Lloyd Bridges' old TV show. Larry doesn't have much of a part. He

was drinking a lot then and wasn't in too great of a shape. You can tell by looking at him; he's kinda bloated.

**LT:** Shut up in there!

Larry glared over his shoulder. It was clear he had that specific kind of hearing that can catch a whisper three rooms away better than a TV at full volume in the same room. I hadn't seen Larry yet on the show, but soon I recognized his voice in a battle cry. There was Larry in a confederate soldier cap—not the handsome young man of the early films and not yet the old tough guy of current films. No, this was during what I have come to think of as "Larry's Lost Years" in my research. He wasn't making the Hollywood films and he wasn't rediscovered yet. Strikingly handsome in his 20s and early 30s, he was just past 40 on the television and almost unrecognizable—in rough shape. Those were the years of barroom brawls that made their way into papers all over the country. When the credits rolled at the end of the show, Larry's name was not easy to find. It was hard to believe Larry's name was above the title in Hollywood only a decade before.

The people in the living room got up to walk around. There was a guy from Australia who had worked on Michael Tierney's film. A few actors. A neighbor here and there. Not what one would necessarily expect at a Hollywood actor's birthday party—but, then again, nothing Lawrence Tierney has ever done is what you would expect from a Hollywood icon. I eventually made my way out after making Larry promise I could see him again before I leave. He assured me that next time we would spend the time alone together. I felt better, then

he asked me who I was again. ("Oh, well . . .")

I decided to go to Eddie Brandt's Saturday Matinee in North Hollywood, where they can find virtually any movie on the planet. The entire Brandt family works in the store. Donovan, the blonde son who looks like he should be fronting a rock and roll band, knew Tierney right away. "Oh, my God! He came in here one day looking for a book that said something about him that he didn't like. Man, he made a scene. You're writing about him? I love it. Is he still raising hell?" Donovan found me a slew of out-of-circulation Tierney films and I went back to the West Hollywood apartment I was staying in and watched THE BODYGUARD. For once, Larry was almost the hero instead of a bad guy. His first scene sent him down to the beach for a swim with his dog and it was clear that Larry had the body, the looks, and the talent to be a matinee idol instead of a tough guy if things had gone differently. I also watched STEP BY STEP, in which Larry is again falsely accused of a murder and even does a pretty good rendition of "Oh Susannah" or some southern ditty. It was clear that he had no problem playing the good guy—and carried a tune pretty well to boot. Bogart made the transition, but Larry had other fish to fry. Destiny had a lot of living for the outlaw to do before he'd get a chance.

Larry left a slew of messages on my answering machine reconfirming our plans. Some in an Italian accent. We decided to go to Venice again; he knew a place there I would like and we'd have lunch, he said. Finally, we were on our way. I had Dillinger in the passenger seat and I felt like the getaway driver as we headed west towards the ocean. I sensed quickly that Larry likes traveling in a car, even if he would obviously rather be in the driver's seat. He had a lot of past in this city, as I saw before we got even a half mile from his door . . .

LT: Hey, that's my mother's old apartment! I brought my whole family out here from Brooklyn. We all lived here at one time. All of us . . . watch it! Stop here at the light. Okay, now go. Sorry, I should never do that. I am the world's worst driver.

SS: That's okay. Listen, I wanted to ask you about BEST OF THE . . .

LT: What's your mother's maiden name?

SS: Monroe. And how about your mother's maiden name?

LT: Crowley. How's that for Irish? Crowley and Tierney! I just finished a film in Boston that has all the old-time Irish actors. It's called SOUTHIE.

SS: John Sayles, who directed you in CITY OF HOPE, just did a film that's very Irish: THE MYSTERY OF ROAN INISH.

LT: He's one of the best filmmakers there is today. I never fail to see a film of his if I can. In fact, I'd go see one of his movies right now.

SS: Tonight?

LT: Is there one playing? You wanna go? Let's go. I think he's a nice guy and he's downright brilliant.

SS: That's true; he is. Do you miss New York at all?

LT: I miss New York. I would go back for a job, okay? What do you know about commercials? I want to meet the people that you know. Do we have time this trip? Set it up, okay?

SS: Has Los Angeles changed very much?

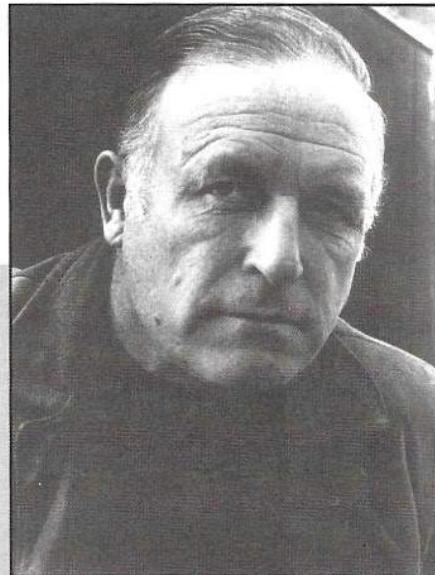
LT: Kid, the more things change, the more they stay the same. But, New York changes. No tall buildings here. I worked as an iron worker on tall buildings for a couple years in New York. Long time ago. Hey, there's a breakfast place. Norm's. Stop there.

SS: Yes, but I thought you wanted to go to the beach?

LT: Make a U. Aww, you coulda made it. Good restaurant. It's famous. Norm's Backyard.

SS: Hey, you're the tour guide.

LT: Turn right here, please!



As I pulled up to the restaurant, Larry struggled with the door, almost stumbling and headed into the restaurant alone without looking back. After I parked, I found Larry at a table he didn't like so we moved again. What appeared to be a security guard came to our table, and we soon realized he was not quite "all there," in spite of the uniform. He was like the crazy David Straithairn character in Larry's movie, CITY OF HOPE, but the restaurant made me think of another film . . .

SS: Larry, this looks just like the restaurant in RESERVOIR DOGS.

LT: Hmm . . . you from NYC originally?

SS: No, Massachusetts.

LT: Where?

SS: Natick.

LT: Sounds like a restaurant. Hot dogs. SS: No, not Nedicks; Natick.

LT: (Laughs) I know. Is this guy a waiter here? Where's my food? When is it coming? What did I order, anyway? Hey! Hey, are you our waiter?

The waiter eyed him warily and looked to me for help. We had only been

sitting for a few minutes. Once the food came, Larry was silent and got down to the business of eating. Shortly thereafter we were back in the car . . .

LT: Let's go to Venice Boulevard. You know where it is, right? I want to show you a place I know. It's a nice place to go.

Pretty soon Larry was relaxed and into a happy "road trip" mood, making jokes . . .

LT: Hey, a kid says, "Daddy?" "Whaddaya want, kid, whaddaya want?" "Will you buy me an encyclopedia for school, Daddy?" "You can walk to school like any other kid."

SS: Larry, you missed your calling. You ought to be doing a comedy series on television. How is your nephew's work? Is he any good?

LT: He's all right. Durante used to say "Everybody wants to get into the act."

SS: Did you work with Jimmy Durante?

LT: Nah, but I knew'm.

SS: Was he the same off stage as on?

LT: No, nobody is. But, when you're an actor everyone wants to pick a fight with you. Where are we? We going south, right? Don't go down Pico! Go to Venice Boulevard. I know where we're going. Christ! Turn right here. Go straight ahead, for Christ's sake! See, turn right here. Jesus!

SS: How did you like it when you lived here?

LT: I like where I am, now. I have my nephew to thank for that. But I like the ocean, too. Look, what's that?

SS: It's a mile marker for the LA Marathon. It's this Sunday.

LT: Hey, I'll be running.

SS: You used to win a lot of running awards at Brooklyn Boys High, right?

LT: How'd you know that?

SS: I do my homework. Here's something else: you played one of the James Brothers in BEST OF THE BAD MEN. Your brother, Scott Brady, played one of the brothers, too, in another film. You two never worked together. Were you close?

LT: No.

SS: How about your brother, Edward? He left Brooklyn for California, too, and made THE HOODLUM with you.

LT: Yeah, we were close. Like friends, you know?

SS: What did you think of THE HOODLUM?

LT: I didn't like it. I hated it, I hated it. Terrible! He was a nice guy, though. I was the first one to come out here for films, and then Scott and then Edward came. Scott did very well, but Edward only made a couple of films and got out of it.

SS: It must have been quite an experience to work with Cecil B. DeMille on THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH.

LT: Yeah, I liked him a lot and he liked me a lot. We got along fine. I was playing the bad guy again, but what else is new?

SS: You really hated that, didn't you? What would you have played if you could have played any character at all?

**LT:** Someone who was not a bad guy. Someone with intelligence, you know?

**SS:** Well, you weren't a bad guy in Norman Mailer's *TOUGH GUYS DON'T DANCE*.

**LT:** In spite of the fact that we were throwing dead bodies off the side of the boat, huh?

**SS:** Well, you were throwing the bodies in the sea to save your son, right?

**LT:** Hey, any time you're throwing bodies overboard it is to save yourself.

**SS:** Norman Mailer was an old pal of yours.

**LT:** He still is. I talk to him all the time. He went to Brooklyn Boy's High with me. I liked that film. I liked that role, too. It's one of my favorites.

**SS:** I saw Ryan O'Neal, who played your son in that film, last night at El Coyote. He was having dinner at the next table. He said to tell you, "Hi, Dad!"

**LT:** Who was he with? Is he still with Audrey Plumber or whatever her name is? (Laughs)

**SS:** Audrey Plumber? Oh, you mean Farrah Fawcett? They're off and on. You have another father role coming up, haven't you—as Bruce Willis' dad in *ARMAGEDDON*. That must have been quite an experience.

**LT:** It's just a job. I haven't seen a screening of it yet, but I saw some scenes the other day and I was really surprised to see what they did with it. You don't know when you're shooting it what these effects are going to look like.

**SS:** Word is you're great in it.

**LT:** Baloney. I don't know how I am in it. I don't like to think too much or I die of chagrin when the movie finally comes out and I'm cut down to one second in it. I just take it as it comes.

**SS:** But are you happy with your work?

**LT:** "Happy" is a vague word. I always like to think I could have done better work.

**SS:** Bruce Willis has a reputation for being a pretty wild guy, too.

**LT:** Well, he was very nice and gracious to work with. I had a very nice time working with him. In fact, he was very quiet when we worked together.

**SS:** Can't wait to see it. In 1963, you made a film called *A CHILD IS WAITING* . . .

**LT:** Oh, John Cassavetes directed that. I loved him. He liked me, too. It was a great experience to work with him. Gena Rowlands was very snooty and very full of herself, like she was "Miss Gena Rowlands to you." John was very human, very warm, very down to earth. You tolerated her because you worshipped him. Judy Garland was in the film, too. She was very nice. Easy to work with, no matter what they say.

**SS:** How did you end up working with Andy Warhol in *BAD*?

**LT:** Who knows? It was a terrible experience. Unprofessional. I didn't really work with him. He was just involved with that film; I never saw him.

**SS:** What about John Huston on *PRIZZI'S HONOR*?

**LT:** Oh, God, I liked John Huston. Who couldn't? I admired him. I thought he was a brilliant director and it's a great film.

**SS:** You were great in it, too.



On film or in real life, Lawrence Tierney often found himself up against the law.

**LT:** Naaww! He just called and told me he had always wanted to work with me and had thought of me for parts a lot before—*THE ASPHALT JUNGLE* and several others, but it never happened. Then finally, it was that part—which was not much of a part, by the way.

**SS:** Hey, it was the beginning of your comeback in a slew of films with major directors.

**LT:** Yeah, yeah . . . hey, what's that sign? Garage sale? C'mon, let's go.

Next thing I knew, we were driving down small streets in Venice, looking for the address of the garage sale. It was a sad affair when we reached it. The yard looked bombed out and there was nothing but a beat-up desk, an old boom box, and a lot of papers lying around.

**LT:** Forget it. I'm staying in the car. It looks like crap. C'mon, I want to show you the place I like.

We found the restaurant in a strip mall. It was hard to tell what it was like from the outside.

**SS:** You want to go in? Have some coffee?

**LT:** No, I had enough coffee, enough to eat. No, let's go down to the water. I used to live down there; I'll show you.

What street is that? Take a right. Shit! Turn left up there. It's a nice place to live. Left here. Listen! Go slowly, I said. I used to live right in here. Not here. On the right hand side. Long time ago. Okay, that's enough. Let's go down to the water.

We parked near the water and looked out over the boardwalk. Larry was quiet. He didn't want to get out of the car. He stared out the window and then the cops came over to move us on. Larry was not comfortable. I wasn't sure if he was still wary of police or if I was reading something into it. Soon, we were on our way back to old Hollywood. Larry read billboards aloud, asked questions about everything. "What's that? Look at this. What's over there?" I told him I liked the way his mind worked. He saw everything. He was like a sponge.

**LT:** Yeah, sure, kid. A sponge sees everything? A sponge sees nothing. Thanks a lot. Hey, ask me the capital of any state!

**SS:** What?

**LT:** Any state. I can tell you. Go ahead.

**SS:** How do you know all this stuff?

**LT:** I learned it in jail. What do you think I did in there all those times to keep from going nuts?

**SS:** What happened all those years when you dropped out of the business?

**LT:** Aw, c'mon . . . I been in and out of the business a lot. I quit it for a long time and went back to New York when things got tough due to my alcoholism, which I finally got a lotta help for and sorta beat it. I drank myself out of five different careers, and now I'm still making pictures. Okay? How's Betsy von Furstenburg? You see her?

**SS:** No, not since last time, but she did tell me that you really helped her. After *PETRIFIED FOREST*, you coached her for a part she wanted, and then read with her at the audition and helped her to get her first Broadway show. She said she's till indebted to you.

**LT:** JOSEPHINE—that was the play. It's nice of Betsy to say nice things about me. Usually people only remember unpleasant things about a person.

I thought it is probably best not to bring up how Betsy told me that the condition under which she convinced Franckton Tone to cast Larry in *PETRIFIED FOREST* was that he did not drink at all during the run. Betsy said he was great, didn't drink, and stole the show. Until the last of the run anyway, when there was an "incident." She did not want to go into details, but it ended with a chair being thrown through a window in an upstate New York motel room and the police coming. She also told me the last time she saw Larry was in Manhattan. He was on a binge and trying to break into her apartment and the police were involved then, too. It was clear when she spoke to me that she was almost unsettled to hear that Larry was alive and well and still working. I had woken up

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# Family Tradition

## Michael Tierney

interviewed  
by  
**Rick  
McKay**

**Scarlet Street:** What do you know about your "lineage," Michael?

**Michael Tierney:** My father and my uncles Scott Brady and Lawrence Tierney all grew up in Yonkers, then Brooklyn. They were a lower-class Irish family just trying to survive. Larry got into track and cross country and did well. Scott and my dad played football and basketball. Larry was the first one to leave for Hollywood, when my father was still in high school. Larry was making his first films and Scott was in the Navy. When he got out, Larry helped him get into film, too. Their dad was a chief of police protecting the water aqueducts in New York City. If you look on the birth certificates of the Crowleys and the Tierneys, you'll see that they were all menial workers, pipe fitters, and common workers. By the time my father was 18, both Larry and Scott were in Hollywood. Then Larry moved the whole family there.

**SS:** Doesn't Larry have a family of his own somewhere?

**MT:** Larry was married once, I guess. It was a long time ago. He lived in Europe for a long time. He has a couple of kids out there somewhere. I have a three-quarter sister by him. It's pretty confusing, but he met my mother first, before my dad, and had a kid by her, but my dad ended up marrying her. She's my sister, but we have the same mother and her father is my uncle. Very CHINATOWN. She used to do theater, but she's not in the business.

**SS:** You practically represent your uncle professionally, and you live around the corner and help him out a lot. Did you always have this relationship with Larry?

**MT:** No, not at all. My father died in 1983 and Larry came out from New York for the funeral. I was only 18 and I had only met him once in my life. He had sent money now and then. He kept in touch. But, he came into my life at the same time that my father died. He was in the process of putting his acting career back together and I helped him and he helped me. Our relationship sort of developed from that. In some ways, he's like a father figure to me—and in some ways I'm a mother to him! We've made up for lost time.

**SS:** The legendary drinker who closed bars with George C. Scott and drank himself out of the business for many years has cleaned up his act at last. What's the story there?

**MT:** Since his stroke about four years ago, Larry has been sober. He's always

been someone who has been a binge drinker, but since the stroke he just can't do it anymore. He doesn't go to AA and count off time like he's in prison. He doesn't see things that way. It's just "Larry dealing with the present behavior at hand."

**SS:** And is he working more?

**MT:** Yeah, Larry has a new film called SOUTHIE about South Boston. It's an indie film that the actor John Shea directed. Donnie Wahlberg, brother of Mark Wahlberg, stars in it. Larry plays the old don of the Irish gang. Mean old guy. It's an important part.

**SS:** How was it growing up in the shadow of your uncles in this town?

**MT:** By the time I was born, Larry was nowhere to be found in Hollywood. He was in New York working in construction. What I remember as a kid was my uncle Scott, who was part leading man and part character actor by the late sixties. He was a nut, too. Drank a lot, but he quit about 12 years before he died. One of his sons acted in my film: Terrence Tierney. For about 16 months, Larry and Scott were back in the same town toward the end, but Larry was a little too difficult and Scott was a little too sick, so they never really got together again.

**SS:** There were about 20 years where Larry dropped out. He made the papers all the time with arrests, too. Fights, stabbings, his mother's suicide when Larry had been arrested earlier that day . . .

**MT:** It was really more like 30 years. We heard from him now and then. He sent

money for tennis lessons. He always had some kind of work ethic. He was a construction worker, a bartender, he was a hansom cab driver in Central Park for years. He speaks fluent French and was over in Europe for a good amount of time. He made very few films then. There was a long time when he was just drinking and living in abandoned buildings and hoboing around the streets of New York. He's tried everything, I guess. On the low end, anyway. I guess it was just him trying to be an alcoholic and finding out what life was like. A lot of fights. A lot of crazy things going on in New York. Chasing girls. Lots and lots of stories, but nothing completely out of character for Larry. He'd go through really peaceful times and then crazy times. Well, I think that's over now, anyway. He just had a pacemaker installed last week. He's already better. He's not out of breath anymore and he's walking fine again.

**SS:** That's great. Larry is pretty well known for his TV work these days.

**MT:** He's done STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, TV BLOOPERS, THE SIMPSONS. He played Elaine's father on SEINFELD.

**SS:** So the story goes on, and you're carrying on the family tradition as a filmmaker.

**MT:** My new film is called EVICTED. It's a day in the lives of "Micro," an out of work trash man, "T," who is a crippled alcoholic, and "Klash," who is a 17-year-old homeless speed freak. Just three unambitious characters trying to survive in Hollywood. Unattached to anything glamorous. Just trying to get fucked up and stoned and whatever. Larry plays the good neighbor "Bob," who is kind of a paternal character to Micro. Friendly

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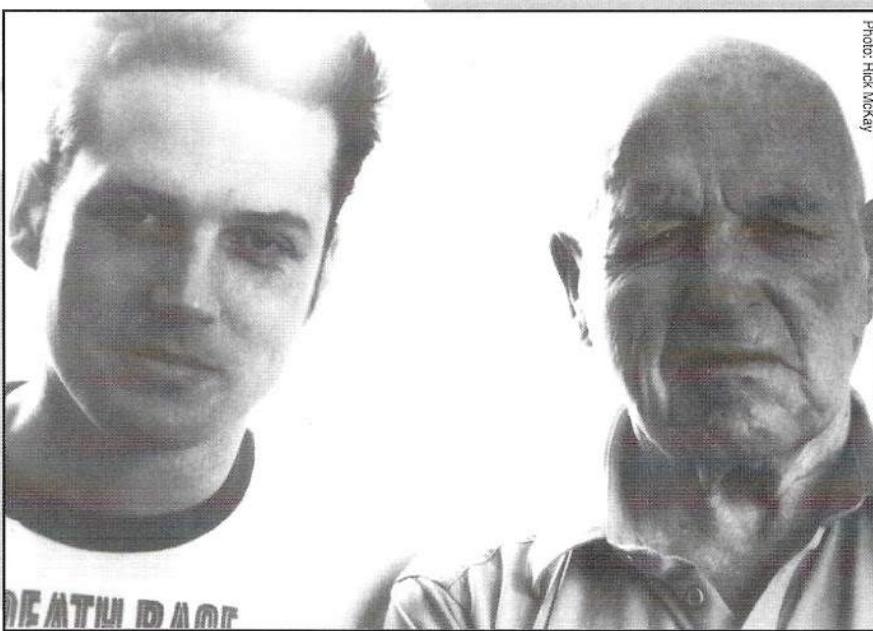


Photo: Rick McKay



One of the sultriest of MGM's contract players, Audrey Totter helped fashion the image of the sexy, brassy, no-nonsense femme fatale of forties films. Her repertoire of gold-digging wives, temperamental tramps, coldhearted career women, and austere ingenues brightened many an otherwise stodgy film, and at the height of her career she played opposite such top stars as Clark Gable, Ray Milland, Robert Montgomery, John Garfield, Claude Rains, and Robert Taylor.

Totter divided her time between MGM's typically glossy output and a series of moodier, less expensive films, many of which were made on loan-out to other studios. The latter group included a number of films that now enjoy cult reputations, foremost among them the film noir classics *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE* (1946), *THE UNSUSPECTED* (1947), *ALIAS NICK BEAL* (1949), and *TENSION* (1949). In addition, Totter starred in two of the most important "concept" films of the late forties: *THE LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946), in which the camera assumes the first-person point of view of the hero, and *THE SET-UP* (1949), one of the earliest pictures in which the action plays out in real time. The former project, an adaptation of one of Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe novels, required Totter to all but carry the film by herself,

*Down These Mean Streets*

# Audrey Totter

interviewed by  
Stephen Bowie



AUDREY TOTTER



Robert Montgomery was a smiling, light-comedy Philip (here called "Phillip") Marlowe opposite Audrey Totter's femme fatale in the 1946 film version of Raymond Chandler's LADY IN THE LAKE.

since the leading man (Robert Montgomery) appears only as a disembodied voice and an occasional reflection in mirrors.

In spite of her excellent work in these films, Totter never quite reached the top echelon of stardom, perhaps because her hard-boiled persona often forced her into playing second leads, or possibly because MGM simply never found the right parts for her. Dissatisfied with the characters she was offered, Totter left her home lot in 1950 and, armed with the power to pick and choose her film roles, seemed poised for even greater success as an actress. But fate intervened less than a year later, when she married and soon became pregnant. Ranking family as her top priority, Totter lessened her professional activity, acting only sporadically—on TV and in B pictures—during the next two decades.

Now retired and with no interest in making a comeback, Totter reminisces about her films with fondness . . .

*Scarlet Street: When did you first decide to become an actress?*

**Audrey Totter:** I can't remember when I wasn't interested in acting. I went to films, Jackie Coogan things, as a child, and I just was fascinated by the whole

thing. My father used to take me up to see the opera in Chicago, and I found that all fascinating. When I was very young, still in high school, I did the local church things, the YMCA players, and I just did all the amateur dramatics I could do.

*SS: How did your professional acting career begin?*

**AT:** I did some theater in Chicago. At that time, the Federal Theatre was the big thing, and I did several parts with them. That's when I started doing radio, all about the same time, and then I toured with MY SISTER EILEEN, and went back to New York. I had done so much Chicago radio it was easy to pick up and do New York radio, which I did until I came out here. I didn't really want to come to Hollywood; I wanted to do a play on Broadway. But MGM offered me a very nice contract, and all of my friends at Walgreen's, which was where all the actors hung out, said "You idiot, you're not going to take a contract with MGM? Don't be stupid, you can always do a play!" So I signed it. And then I tried to get out of it, after I got here! I hated it out here; I loved New York. They wouldn't let me go, but after a while I began liking it and, next thing I knew, I met my husband.

*SS: Did you enjoy being under contract to MGM during its heyday?*

**AT:** It was wonderful! We were so lucky in those days to be under contract. It is true that you were not paid the amount of money they're getting today, anywhere near what you deserved, even the big stars. Also, they controlled you. I had a lot of opportunities to do wonderful parts, and they wouldn't let me go, and what they offered me wasn't as good. You didn't have a choice, that was the only thing, but you were certainly protected. We were treated beautifully. At least I was; I have no complaints. MGM was wonderful to me. I loved being there. I loved being with the people, not just the costars and producers and directors, but all the crews. Everybody was a family. I'm sure this was true of the other studios, but I think MGM, at least in those days, was the "Tiffany."

*SS: A lot of your earliest roles were voice-overs and dubbing jobs. In BEWITCHED, Phyllis Thaxter played a woman with a split personality and you provided the voice of her alter ego.*

**AT:** Yes, Phyllis Thaxter was the lead in it, and I was her voice. When Phyllis watched it, she said, "I don't know why I couldn't do the voice; why couldn't I have done it over?" And I don't know,



LEFT: Hair swept up, Audrey Totter is not to be trusted opposite Michael North in *THE UNSUSPECTED* (1947).  
RIGHT: Letting her hair down, Totter is all smiles for Robert Walker in *THE BEGINNING OR THE END* (1947).

either, but [writer/director] Arch Oboler wanted an entirely different kind of a voice. That was one of the very first things I did. They said, "Oh, we've got a girl here from New York who used to do radio," and that was how that happened. SS: Then you had a small but memorable part in *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE*, as the girl John Garfield picks up at the train station.

AT: That was the very first one I ever did. It was only one scene. Originally I wore a black wig in it, and John Garfield and I were in front of a tiger's cage. They did the scene there, and the tiger did what he does all over us. (Laughs) When it was over, they yelled, "Cut!" and John Garfield said, "Audrey and I get a stunt check!" But they decided they didn't like that and they reshot it. They didn't like me in the black wig, and they put me in a brown wig—by then it was after I'd done the voice in *BEWITCHED*. The second version was much better, with me saying, "It's a hot day and that's a leather seat." People have quoted that for years. I enjoyed making that with John Garfield. It's very interesting, because his daughter—see, his name was Julie, and he named her Julie. And she was in *THE NATIVITY* [a 1978 made-for-TV movie]. I met her over there in Spain, where we made it. We were supposed to make it in Israel, but they had an Arab upset so we went to Spain instead. It was fun working with her.

SS: After *POSTMAN*, you filmed a comedy called *THE COCKEYED MIRACLE* and a melodrama, *THE SECRET HEART*.

AT: THE COCKEYED MIRACLE! Oh, I enjoyed playing that. I got to play an ingenue, which was something I'd never done before; that was really why I did that part.

SS: After that, you starred in the film that Scarlet Streeters will probably remember best from among all your credits—*LADY IN THE LAKE*.

AT: I loved doing it! I loved working with Bob Montgomery. They'd tested many actresses for it, and they wanted to try some of the newer players that Bob didn't know because he had been in the war. They were running a bunch of

scenes from various films. By accident, they put in a scene from one little movie I had made when I first came there [*THE HIDDEN EYE*], that Dick Whorf directed, in which I played one tiny scene with Edward Arnold. And Billy Grady, the man in charge of talent for MGM, said, "Oh, for crying out loud, we didn't mean to submit this!" Bob said, "Just a minute, I'd like to see it." After seeing me, he said, "She's the one." Grady said, "She hasn't been in anything for a year or two, and this is a big part." Bob said, "We'll test her." Bob Montgomery had tested and talked to many, many actresses, and he just couldn't find the right one. Well, everybody wondered why the test was so successful, and why I finally got the part. I had been used to working with a microphone in radio—some theater, but mostly radio—and the other actresses had never had that experience. They didn't know how to work except with another actor. They couldn't imagine the camera as an actor. I had imagined the microphone as an actor for so long, it came naturally to me.

SS: MGM reportedly hated *LADY IN THE LAKE* when they saw it, because Montgomery used the subjective camera as the "star" of the film.

AT: They thought it was a dumb idea.

SS: It is a little awkward in spots, but Montgomery pulls it off for the most part.

AT: I thought he was a good director. He was also one of the best actors in the business. Nobody could play light comedy, except the English, like Bob Montgomery. You know, there was one picture [*RAGE IN HEAVEN*] he made with Ingrid Bergman, and he didn't want to do it. He decided he'd get them to recast him. So, he did it all in a monotone, and all the reviews said, "What an interesting way of speaking! What an interesting concept of the character!" (Laughs)

SS: When MGM assigned you to a little two-line role in the Clark Gable picture *ADVENTURE*, you used a similar technique to sabotage your scene.

AT: That was the strangest experience I've ever had! I was fairly new, hadn't done that much, but I'd done more than that bit in *ADVENTURE*! They gave me

the script and I thought it was dreadful—I was right, it didn't do well at all. Billy Grady brought me down to meet Victor Fleming, and he said, "I want you for it." So I turned to Grady and said, "I don't want to do this film, and I don't think it's fair that I should have to." Fleming said, "I want her. I insist that she play the part." Later, I met Clark Gable. I never knew Clark Gable, but he stopped me on the lot—he was such a nice man. He said, "I understand you don't want to do this, and I don't think you should be made to do it. I understand it's Vic that's insisting. I'll tell him you don't want to do it, and he won't do anything about it; he won't make you if I ask." First thing I know, I got a call from Grady telling me to report to the set! I said, "But I thought Gable had fixed it up." He said, "There was nothing he could do about it. Fleming insists that you do it." So I walked onto the set, and Gable was there. He wasn't in the scene, and he said, "Play with your back to the camera, and he won't say a thing because I'll be right there." And that's what happened!

SS: Didn't you also date Clark Gable for a while?

AT: That was later. Really sweet man. I went out with him a couple of times. All he talked about was Carole Lombard. Sad.

SS: Then you did *THE BEGINNING OR THE END*, the story of the development of the atom bomb.

AT: I wasn't too gung-ho about doing it, but I think it was a picture that was important historically.

SS: The stars were Brian Donlevy, whom you also went out with for a while, and Robert Walker.

AT: Robert Walker was a very good actor with a lot of really serious problems. The biggest one was that he was madly in love with Jennifer Jones, and never got over that she left him for David O. Selznick. She used to live across the street from me. I didn't drive a car in those days, and Bob used to drive me home and I'd ask him in for a drink, and he would just sit there and literally cry because she was across the street.

**SS:** On *THE UNSUSPECTED* you worked with Michael Curtiz, who had a reputation for being a tyrant on his sets.

**AT:** Well, they used to say that about Fritz Lang, too. Now, I never worked with Fritz Lang, but my father was from Vienna, and I knew several Austrians, and met him through that, and I went out with him a couple of times. He was a very nice German gentleman; I hear he was a terror on the set, but I don't know. Mike Curtiz, I know, had this terrible reputation. *THE UNSUSPECTED*, that was made for his company at Warners. He had his own company for a while, because he tried to buy my contract from MGM, and they wouldn't sell it. I know he put the boy who played the lead [Michael North] under contract, and he put Doris Day under contract. But with us he was charming; he was lovely.

**SS:** Gable, Brian Donlevy, Fritz Lang—that's a pretty impressive list of beaus.

**AT:** Also Cary Grant, and Curt Bernhardt, who directed me in *HIGH WALL* and *THE BLUE VEIL*.

**SS:** Weren't you also linked romantically to Elia Kazan, back when you first went to Chicago in the late thirties?

**AT:** Oh, Elia Kazan, that's another story. What a strange man he was; what a weird man! I used to audition in Chicago, and he was there once with GOLDEN BOY. He auditioned me. He said, "You're very talented, you should go far. There's nothing here that we've got, but don't worry." I started to cry, and I said "My parents don't want me to do this, especially my mother." He said, "Where do you live? I'll come to your house and meet your mother." I said "I live in Joliet." He said, "Well, I'll come with you; we'll do it on one of my dark nights," which was a Monday night. And my mother was so impressed, and he showed my mother that all actors weren't bums. And I was very grateful for that. And then he wrote a book [*A Life*, Knopf, 1988], and instead of telling the true story, which would have been a wonderful story in his biography, he said he was seeing various girls. That's all he talked about, how many girls he had, and he said, "One of my girls was a little girl from Joliet, Illinois, who later came to Hollywood and had a minor career." And I thought, "You silly son of a bitch. Why would you say that about me instead of saying the true story?" I don't know why, but he couldn't stand it; he had to say that he'd had all these girls. Weird, weird man. Too bad—he was very talented.

**SS:** You've been quoted as saying that all those tales of the Hollywood casting couch are vastly exaggerated, anyway.

**AT:** I never ran into anybody who wasn't a nice guy. I don't know what they're like today, but they were all gentlemen; they treated you like a lady. My story is, I didn't sleep with anybody—nobody asked me. (Laughs) Nobody made any passes at you; nothing like that went on. There's this reputation out here that everybody's jumping in the hay—and with the movies you see today, you could believe it. I was under contract to

MGM when L.B. Mayer ran that studio with an iron hand, and you'd better not make a pass at any of the actresses! I'm not saying that something like that didn't go on; I'm sure there were love affairs—but as for someone being gross, coming on to you—no way!

**SS:** After *THE UNSUSPECTED*, you portrayed a psychiatrist who helps Robert Taylor solve a murder mystery in *HIGH WALL*.

**AT:** We were working at night, and Bob didn't want to eat around MGM, so we decided to go find a place. Everything was crowded, and he said, "Hey, I've got the perfect restaurant for us." I said, "Where?" He said, "I'm not going to tell you." And it was his house! He called up Barbara [Stanwyck, his wife] and said, "Scramble us some eggs."

was either that or be suspended, so I held my nose and I did it.

**SS:** Later in 1949, you made *ALIAS NICK BEAL*. It was a contemporary version of *FAUST* set on the waterfront.

**AT:** It would have done better if it had a different title. Originally it was called something else, *THE DARK NIGHT* or something. *ALIAS NICK BEAL* sounds like a B movie, which it wasn't.

**SS:** Next you played another ingenue, this time in the famous film noir picture *THE SET-UP*.

**AT:** Oh, everybody was so enthusiastic about that film; I've never seen anything like it. Everybody came early and nobody wanted to go home. Even when we weren't in the scene, we were there. Rare, rare camaraderie. I thought Bob Ryan deserved an Academy Award, but he wasn't even nominated, because nobody even heard about it.

**SS:** Was that your favorite film, or did you prefer *LADY IN THE LAKE*?

**AT:** Well, *THE SET-UP* was my favorite—which I didn't want to do, by the way. I was still under contract to Metro, and the man in charge of talent called and said, "They want you over at RKO to do this movie. You don't have much to do, but what you do is good." I said, "What?" He described the scenes, and it sounded like an UFA film. I said, "I don't think so," but I thought about it and said, "All right, send me a script. Who's directing it?" He said, "Robert Wise." I said, "Who?" I'd never heard of him! (Laughs) Anyway, I read the script and I thought it was just marvelous. I said, "I'd like to do it, but I want to meet the director"—and, of course, the minute I met Bob I knew we were in, because he had such great ideas.

**SS:** For example, shooting it in real time.

**AT:** Yes, that was Bob's idea.

**SS:** Was he your favorite director?

**AT:** By far.

**SS:** *THE SET-UP* has a cult following, now, but it wasn't that successful when it was released, was it?

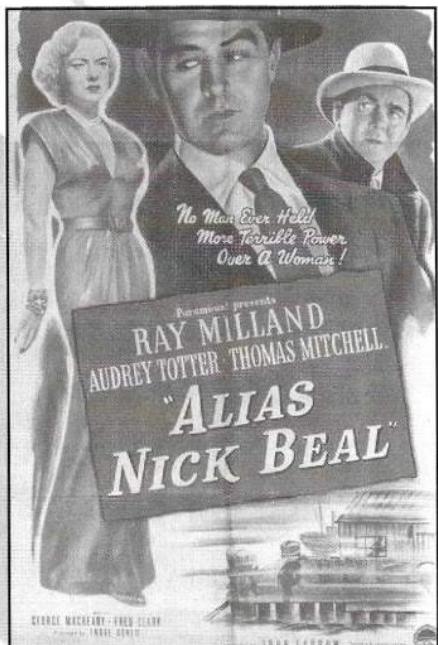
**AT:** They were making another fight picture, *CHAMPION* with Kirk Douglas, and *THE SET-UP* died because Howard Hughes stupidly decided to put it out as competition. He never gave it any publicity, didn't have time. And it died. It did very well in New York, though; it won all kinds of awards.

**SS:** Shortly after *THE SET-UP*, your MGM contract ran out and you began free-lancing.

**AT:** I went one year under contract to Columbia, which was a dumb thing. Nothing happened there. They were going to give me the world! Harry Cohn promised me everything! Harry Cohn, unfortunately, didn't carry out what he said he was going to do. But, I signed the contract in January [1952], the same month I met my husband. So I started not to really care, and didn't fight him. In September, I told him I was going to get married, and I said, "Will you let me out of the contract?" He said, "Sure."

**SS:** But during the fifties you made several more films for Columbia.

**AT:** Well, when he said, "You get out of the contract," he added, "But you have

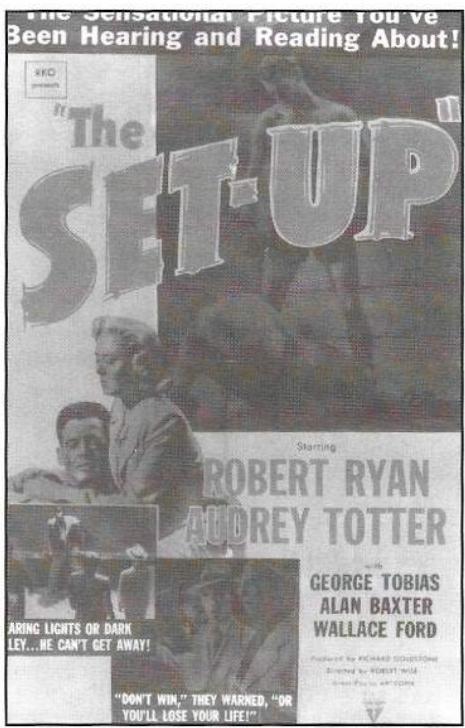


**SS:** In 1948 MGM loaned you out to Universal for *THE SAXON CHARM*, which starred Robert Montgomery as a Broadway producer. You had a singing and dancing number in that film . . .

**AT:** It's not me singing. Usually the singing artist will record and then the actor or actress who cannot sing will mouth it. Well, we couldn't do that because the dance was so intricate that the vocal had to be recorded afterwards. So I had to sing, and I cannot sing! And there were all these extras and stars, including Susan Hayward and John Payne, listening! When it was all over, Bob Montgomery said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank all of you. You all deserve an Academy Award for your brilliant performances in not laughing at Audrey Totter." (Laughs)

**SS:** Then you acted again with Clark Gable in a gambling picture called *ANY NUMBER CAN PLAY*.

**AT:** I did nothing on that. I didn't want to do it; it was one of those things MGM forced me to do. It was a very small part after I'd played leads, and Clark Gable said to me, "I think this is terrible, their forcing you to do this." But it



to give me three pictures." ASSIGNMENT PARIS was the first of them. I forgot the other two.

**SS:** One was a musical called CRUISIN' DOWN THE RIVER.

**AT:** Oh, God, that horror! That's right; that was Columbia. Stupid movie, stupid movie . . .

**SS:** There's an interesting story behind how you met your husband, isn't there?

**AT:** I'm a little psychic. I will get a flash, as I did the minute I met him. It was a blind date. I was doing a radio show called MEET MILLIE. I wanted to buy some gifts for the orchestra, and I'd ordered all these little cufflinks. But there was one that I forgot, and I dashed back to the store. When I got back, the salesgirl said to me, "A doctor comes in here all the time that we're all crazy about, and he picked out the very cufflinks you'd bought. And he said he'd love to meet you some time." She said to me, "I just know you'll like him" And I was about to say, "No thanks," but something said to me, "Do it." So I said, "All right." Then I went overseas and he kept calling me and calling me, and I wasn't home. Finally, he got me. And I was trying to make an excuse not to do it, and he finally said, "Look, I'll bring another couple with me." I thought, "Well, that's pretty classy," so I agreed. My sister answered the door—I was upstairs—and she came up and all she said to me was, "Wow!" Well, I came downstairs and the minute I looked at him I knew I was going to marry him. I knew it! I get psychic flashes about things like that every once in a while.

**SS:** It was your marriage that caused your career to decline, wasn't it?

**AT:** Well, yes, my career was interrupted when I got married, and that was all right. That was my choice, and I'm not sorry. I had the most wonderful marriage, 42 years of sheer joy and happiness.

I was lucky. My life changed. I went from the movie world to the academic world. My husband was a professor at UCLA, and he was also chief of medicine at the V.A. So I gave up doing the big films; took too much time.

**SS:** You made a few movies during the fifties and sixties, but most were pretty ordinary B pictures.

**AT:** I liked the part in THE WOMAN THEY ALMOST LYNCHED. CHAMP FOR A DAY, A BULLET FOR JOEY, THE VANISHING AMERICAN—they had parts I liked. GHOST DIVER was supposed to be a television show, and they released it as a movie.

**SS:** What about WOMEN'S PRISON?

**AT:** That was for Columbia. Oh, what marvelous movies I made for them. (Laughs) But it was fun playing with Ida Lupino. It was a good cast; it was not a good film.

**SS:** In THE CARPETBAGGERS, you appeared as a "hooker with a heart of gold" who comforts George Peppard.

**AT:** My daughter went to high school with the producer's daughter, and he said, "Aud, you gotta do this part for me; you've simply gotta do this part. What can I offer you?" I said, "Well, I'm on my way to Europe. Can you pay me enough money to cover it?" He said, "Yeah, I will." I got a tremendous amount of money for playing one scene!

**SS:** Then you made the infamous Electrovision version of HARLOW.

**AT:** That was nothing. I don't remember it too well. I got talked into it because it was new, experimental, and everybody would be seeing it. It was a dumb move; I never should have made it.

**SS:** Even as you scaled back your film work, you became active in television.

**AT:** First of all, after I was married, I did a Western called CIMARRON CITY. They told me that I would only work maybe one or two days each week.

So that was fine; that was all I wanted and that's all I did. It only lasted for a year. Then OUR MAN HIGGINS was a half hour show, and I weren't needed to do that much. We rehearsed it for two days, and filmed it for three days. I thought that was gonna go to a second season, I really did. Naturally, my husband was thrilled when it didn't. And then came MEDICAL CENTER; I just did that as a lark. My daughter had gone off to college, and I was only working on that maybe a day a week. Jayne Meadows had played my role, that nurse, and then she gave it up. She called the makeup

man and said, "Ask Audrey how she enjoys playing my line." (Laughs) That's about all I ever did; I had a line in it now and then.

**SS:** You did some interesting guest shots, too. ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS, PERRY MASON, ROUTE 66 . . .

**AT:** Once in a while I'd do a little something like that. Took a few days; that's how I used to get my Christmas money!

**SS:** What's going on in your life now that you're retired?

**AT:** Well, my husband died [in March of 1995] and I really haven't gotten over it yet. People say, "Why don't you go back to work and play little old ladies?" I have no desire to do that. I have no desire to do anything. My friends all want me to travel. I really can't sit around and mourn forever; that's not right, either. It's difficult, but I keep focusing on the good. It was a good marriage; I have a marvelous daughter and two very dear grandchildren.

**SS:** You've done a convention or two in the past year, haven't you?

**AT:** Yes, they have these film festivals, and I've been asked a lot. My husband didn't care to travel, but I did go in August [1995] to Memphis to do the Western films. Of course, I only made two

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# Hail to the Master

# Robert Wise

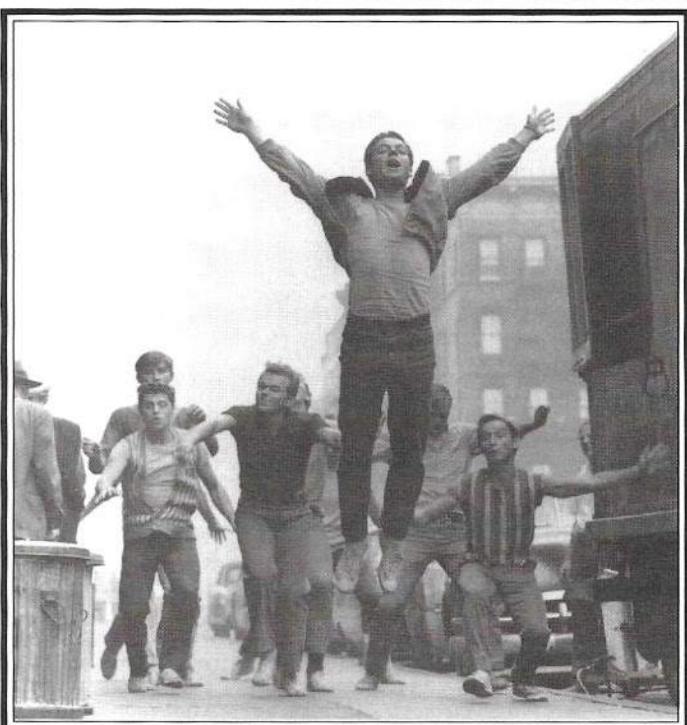
interviewed by  
Kevin G. Shinnick

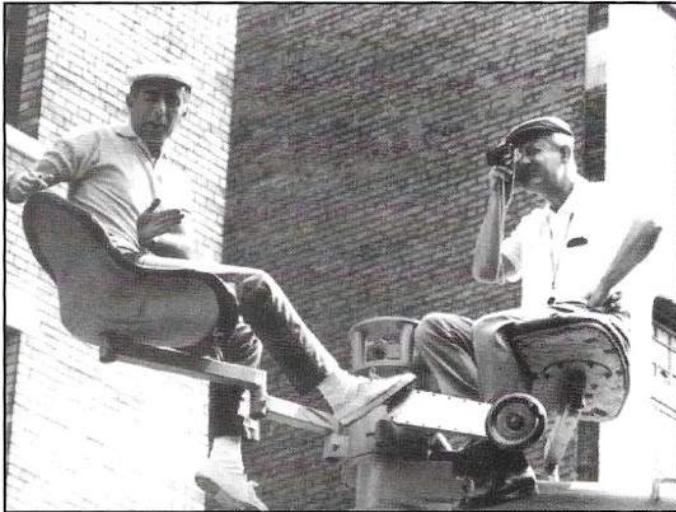
You'll search far and wide to find another filmmaker as versatile as Robert Wise, this year's recipient of the annual American Film Institute Award. The veteran director's filmography spans everything from horror movies (1963's *THE HAUNTING*) to blockbuster musicals (1965's *THE SOUND OF MUSIC*).

In *Scarlet Streets* #25 and #27, we covered Robert Wise's work on *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (1951) and his timeless films with the famed Val Lewton unit at RKO: *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE* (1944), *MADEMOISELLE FIFI* (1944), and *THE BODY SNATCHER* (1945). We conclude our three-part interview with the director's musicals, his foray into *STAR TREK* country, and his forties *films noir* . . . .

**Scarlet Street:** You've made so many terrific films. We just want to mention a few titles—for instance, the film noir classic *BORN TO KILL*.

**Robert Wise:** Well, that was an early film of mine, when I was moving out of B pictures. It was kind of a medium-budget film. I loved working with Claire Trevor. She was marvelous, one of my best experiences, and Walter Slezak was lovely on that, and Lawrence





LEFT: Luke (Russ Tamblyn) tries to put the moves on Theodora (Claire Bloom) in **THE HAUNTING** (1963), but she only has eyes for her fellow woman. RIGHT: Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise shared directing honors on the classic **WEST SIDE STORY** (1961).

Tierney . . . Larry was a very interesting guy. You always felt a little edgy about him, and that quality came off on the screen I think that helped make the character he did in **BORN TO KILL**, and in other films like **DILLINGER** and what-not.

**SS:** Did you pick **BORN TO KILL** as your own project?

**RW:** No, it was assigned by the studio. They had a book with the title *Deadlier Than the Male* and they wanted a film for Larry Tierney. They changed the title to **BORN TO KILL** to reflect his character, whereas the book's title referred to the character played by Claire Trevor. I very much preferred the original title.

**SS:** Speaking of title changes, **GAME OF DEATH** was a remake of **THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME**.

**RW:** Oh, **GAME OF DEATH!** (Laughs) I only remember one thing about it. It was, as you said, a remake—it had been made before, and I had to look at the old film because they had scenes of the dogs running through the jungle and the studio wanted to use those cuts; they didn't want to reshoot that. So I had to look at the damn original film just to see how I could manage to use those cuts of the dogs, and that haunted me all the way through shooting. Every time I'd get into a scene in my film that was similar to a scene in the original, the original scene came flashing back to my mind. It bugged me all the way through the shooting—I hated it!

**SS:** How about **THE SET-UP**?

**RW:** Oh, I liked that one. It was based on a poem written in the 1920s by Joseph Moncure March. Of course, the fighter in the poem was black, but we cast Robert Ryan, who had been a boxer in college, at Dartmouth. Audrey Totter was in that, too, and she was very good. We told the story in real time, which was innovative. The film opens with an establishing shot of a clock in a street, and 70 minutes later we end on a shot of the clock showing that 70 minutes have passed.

**SS:** What are your memories of making **HOUSE ON TELEGRAPH HILL**?

**RW:** Very, very, very vague. Very weak memories. Valentina Cortese—I liked her so much. She was a good actress and I enjoyed working with her. And Richard Basehart was very good. It was not a favorite project of mine; as a matter of fact, I tried not to do it.

**SS:** That doesn't come across in the work.

**RW:** Well, good, I guess. I haven't seen it since I made it. The people were good and the atmosphere was fine, but it was not a favorite of mine.

**SS:** *I WANT TO LIVE!* is one of your most famous films.

**RW:** That's another story, yes. Susan Hayward was so marvelous to work with—very good, very professional. It was a very memorable experience for me, because one of the main things a director has to do is to research his subject matter. For example, on **THE SET-UP** I spent weeks observing the fighters in Long Beach. And it paid off; many of the bits in the film came from things I actually saw, like the blind man who has to have someone describe the fight to him. The director has to know what the reality is of anything he's doing, and on **I WANT TO LIVE!** I had to know what an execution was—so I saw an execution.

**SS:** My God! Isn't that going to extremes to achieve realism?

**RW:** I didn't want the critics to say, "Well, that's some Hollywood writer and director's version of what it's like to go to the gas chamber." I wanted them to say, "That's it; that's the way." One day I approached the warden at San Quentin and told him the reason behind my request, and he said, "Well, Mr. Wise, I agree with you. Capital punishment is the law in California. I think it's just as well for the citizens to see how it works." So he called me a couple of weeks later, asked me to come on Friday night so I could be there early on Friday morning. I was there inside with the warden and the doctor, and with the guys that put the acid in the capsule. There was a young black man, Vince Anderson, who had lost his last appeal after two years—just like the woman in

the film. Fortunately for me, it was very quiet, very unemotional. I didn't know whether I'd be able to watch—there were those louvered windows—or get sick or turn away or what. Since it was very unemotional, I found I was able to force myself to watch. If you've seen the picture, you know what happens. They strap them in the chair across the chest, the arms, the legs. I cut away very quickly after Susan had gotten the gas, but in actuality the body strapped in just twists and turns for about seven or eight minutes . . .

**SS:** That sounds truly horrible!

**RW:** . . . before the doctor pronounces them dead.

**SS:** Was **THE HAUNTING** your idea or did someone bring it to you?

**RW:** It was a book by Shirley Jackson called *The Haunting of Hill House*. I found that and brought it in. I was at Golden Studios finishing the post production of **WEST SIDE STORY** and I read a review of *The Haunting of Hill House* in *Time* magazine. I thought, "That sounds like it might be a helluva picture," and to my surprise I found out that none of the studios had picked it up. So I got a copy, read it, and thought it was wonderful. I persuaded United Artists to buy it for me. They did, and I brought Nelson Gidding, a friend of mine who had done **I WANT TO LIVE!** and a couple of other things for me, to do the screenplay. So we got the screenplay done, and then United Artists went cold on it and didn't want to go ahead. It's what we call a turnaround, so I had to see if I could set it up somewhere else. Well, I had got out of a contract at MGM sometime before, and I had promised to give them another film. My agent said this could be the script to fill my obligation so we took it over to MGM. They were willing to go with it, but they only wanted to put a million dollars into it. Doesn't sound like anything today, but this is going back some 30 years and the best budget we could get over at Culver City was 1.4 million. I was going to London about that time for a command performance of



**LEFT:** Twenty years after *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (1951), Wise returned to sci-fi for *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN* (1971). Here, time is running out for James Olson as he tries to turn off an automatic self-destruct mechanism. **RIGHT:** Where no director had gone before: The first *STAR TREK* feature film in 1979.

*WEST SIDE STORY*, and someone said, "You know, MGM has a studio outside of London. Maybe they could do it for a better price?" So I took a script to London and gave it to MGM Border One, and they liked it and came up with a budget of one million fifty thousand. The studio went for it and that's why it was made in England, even though I kept the New England background.

**SS:** *The only thing that gives it away is the shot when Eleanor comes out of the parking garage. One of the street signs . . .*

**RW:** Well, we tried to be very careful about that. We blew it. (Laughs)

**SS:** Casting Julie Harris as Eleanor was a brilliant stroke.

**RW:** Wasn't it, though? Yes, what a marvelous actress! I knew her reputation in New York from the stage.

**SS:** Was if because of his previous participation in *WEST SIDE STORY* that you cast Russ Tamblyn?

**RW:** No it was because we needed someone to play the young nephew, and he was under contract to MGM. They said, "Why don't we use our boy here? He can play this fresh young kid."

**SS:** What about the rest of the cast?

**RW:** Claire Bloom—I can't remember, now, how she came into the picture. They used to have something in England called the E.D. plan, where you could get some subsidy from the government, and you were allowed to have one or two actors, a director, and a writer who were non-English—they could be Americans—and all the rest had to be English in order to qualify for the plan. That's probably one of the reasons Claire was in the film, although I think she was perfect for the part.

**SS:** *THE HAUNTING* has very strong depth of focus. Was there a special lens you were using?

**RW:** (Laughs) That's funny! Yes, in black and white you could get more depth of focus. Color and CinemaScope and those things just had no depth. I had a very interesting experience on *THE HAUNTING*. I wanted to get some extreme looks and angles and the widest was done in

Panavision. The widest lens they had at that time was about a 35mm, and I called Bob Gottshawk, who was the head of Panavision in Los Angeles. I called him and said, "Bob, don't you have anything wider than a 35mm? I need it for angles." He said, "We're working on it. We have a 28 we're developing, but it's still not right. It's got some distortion in it." I said, "Well that's just what I want! I want that!" He was very reluctant to let me have it, but I finally twisted his arm. He finally sent it over to me, but I had to sign a document saying I would not hold them responsible if anything came out in the way of distortion. So I used it on some of the shots up the spiral staircase, and particularly on the upstairs hallway going down to the room at the end.

**SS:** You never seem to have the camera shooting quite at a straight angle. Everything is a little off, like the house.

**RW:** Normally I don't like to have a cocked camera, but one of the things I wanted to do very much was make that house a character—bring it alive. I thought that was a marvelous house; it was an old manor house being used as a hotel about 10 miles outside of Stratford on Avon.

**SS:** It's extremely atmospheric.

**RW:** When we filmed the exteriors without any people, I shot a lot of the establishing shots in infra-red film. It brought out the striations of the rocks and the stone very much. Also, when you shoot skies in infra-red, it makes the sky go black and the clouds go white. We did that when we didn't have any people in the shot. I loved the windows up there—kind of a tower and turret. When Julie arrived we cut up to the windows like they were two eyes, and I then shot down at Julie like it was the point of view of the house. I tried to make that house as much as a character as I could.

**SS:** Do you yourself have any belief in the supernatural?

**RW:** Oh, I think so, yeah. I think there's more out there than we can see, feel, touch, and smell . . . I've never had a psychic experience; I wish I could have,

somewhat. I'm a great believer in it, but I've never had an experience in it. I believe in UFOs, too, although I've never seen one.

**SS:** So that's why you gave that little extra something to *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* and *THE HAUNTING*.

**RW:** Maybe so. You know, for us to think that we're the only possible intelligence in all the universe is just the biggest ego trip possible! (Laughs)

**SS:** On the subject of science fiction, we haven't mentioned *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN*. That film has a completely cold and analytical look.

**RW:** Yes, well, that was the nature of the piece.

**SS:** Does much of that mood come about as you're shooting?

**RW:** No, no, no—you have to do much more than that before you can get a mood and a setting. First with your sets—how they're done, the shape, color, and size. And there's the cinematographer—you have to cast the cinematographer just right to get the kind of quality you want, such as romantic or very realistic, or a documentary quality. All of this is planned way in advance, way in advance.

**SS:** With the exception of David Wayne, you cast some relative unknowns in *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN*.

**RW:** I did that deliberately because of the nature of the piece. I like to make a picture as believable and credible as possible, and I thought it would be much more believable if we didn't have Gregory Peck handling those mechanical arms through the glass and all that business. We had somebody—James Olson—who was not that familiar with the audiences. I said to the studio, "Let's save some money on the big name cast and put that money into the production and the look of the film."

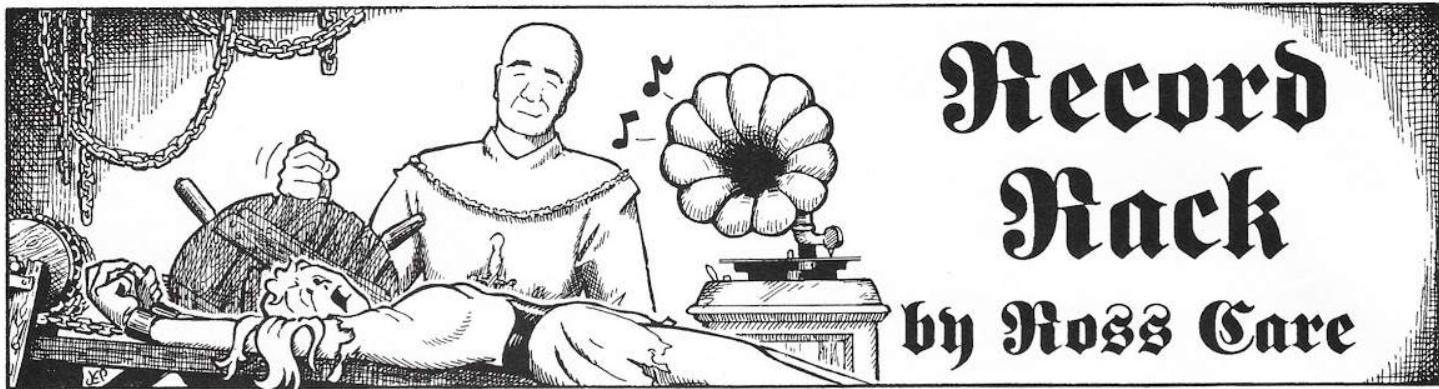
**SS:** It's a terrific film. What can you tell us about making *AUDREY ROSE*?

**RW:** Well, we went to New York and shot a few shots—just for a few days, not

*Continued on page 70*

# Record Rack

## by Ross Care



### Portraits in Black

As *film noir* made the transition from the gritty wartime/postwar forties into the Brave New World of the affluent fifties, the style of music composed for this potent genre underwent a transformation as well, as established Hollywood veterans such as Miklos Rozsa and Franz Waxman, with roots deep in the sedate Old World, made room for brash, jazz-friendly, American-bred newcomers such as Alex North, Elmer Bernstein, and Henry Mancini. Now, as both modern life and contemporary popular culture paradoxically become more appalling and, simultaneously, more boring, we seem to be delving ever deeper into the vaults and archives of the past for sustenance. Which, as Cole Porter once wrote, is "all right with me."

Thus a variety of recent *musique noire* CDs have been released, presenting the opportunity for experiencing a varied and revealing overview of the musical end of the crime genre. Of course, the overall style and sound of Hollywood music gradually shifted with the fifties, and not just for *film noir*. Every genre expanded sonically with the innovations of the decade that brought the world both living bras and Living Stereo. Up until 1950, Hollywood music drew resolutely on its European roots, which generally meant symphonic scores in the style of romantic late 19th century masters, with occasional hints of the more accessible early 20th century moderns thrown in. But with the fifties, North and Bernstein, inspired by intrinsically American composers such as Gershwin and Aaron Copland, opened up film scoring to the possibilities of jazz and other forms of previously unexploited popular idioms. Film music exploded into a ballsy new guise, fusing a fresh style of orchestral scoring with the best pop influences from both the past and (the then) contemporary present. Strangely enough, it is partially this current fascination with the cool fifties and the pre-psychadelic sixties of lounge and film (and TV) *noir* that has revived interest in much of the more esoteric film music of those eras.

### Original Noir

To paraphrase *SUNSET BOULEVARD* (1950), in Golden Age Hollywood "they

had careers then," careers that literally spanned decades. Joan Crawford started out dancing in MGM musicals in the late twenties and thirties, bounced back from what could have been a post MGM career fade-to-black with Warner Bros.' *MILDRED PIERCE* in 1945, was a Frankfurter-like *FEMALE ON THE BEACH* (1955) in one of Universal International's low-budget melodramas that carried atmospheric forties *noir* into the fifties, and ended up pushing Pepsi while gamely hacking people to death in the

more surprised than Max himself, but such were the twists of fate and careers over the long goodbye that made up the rise and fall of Golden Age Hollywood.

Though versatile Golden Age composers scored anything and everything assigned to them in those prolific studio days, several managed to excel in certain genres and became somewhat typecast, not once but several times over one career. For example, Miklos Rozsa (1907-1995) was something of a *noir* specialist in the late forties, while in the fifties (after settling in as key house composer at MGM for the decade), he became the definitive composer of historical epics. Indeed, to film music buffs who came of age in the fifties, a trip back to the forties Rozsa evokes an inescapable "Ben Hur Hits the Big Town" impression.

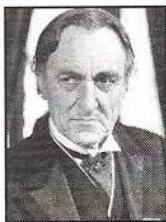
Rozsa was one of the most prolific and accomplished of the grand old men of Hollywood music, with a solid sound that did not vary or evolve a great deal over the decades, but one that remained finely crafted, instantly recognizable, and infinitely appealing. As Fred Karlin noted, Rozsa's scores are "a blend of intellect and heart." Born in Budapest, a contemporary of Bartok and Kodály, Rozsa shared his countrymen's passion for Hungarian folk music, but (unlike Bartok, who ended his life in relative obscurity and poverty) also forged a successful double life of composing for both the concert hall and international cinema.

Actually, Rozsa's initial success in scoring Alexander Korda's *THE THIEF OF BAGDAD* (1940) launched his initial phase, in which he was almost instantly typecast as a composer of exotic fantasies. In 1945, he introduced a genuinely exotic electronic instrument, the theremin, into not one but two key psychological scores, *THE LOST WEEKEND* and Hitchcock's delirious romantic thriller, *SPELLBOUND*. These, along with *THE KILLERS* in 1946, led to Rozsa's *noir* period. In 1949, he signed a long-term contract with MGM, and the rest, as they say, is history. Literally, in this case. With the release of *QUO VADIS* in 1951, Rozsa began a phase that found him underscoring most of the major historical events of the last 2,000 years, from the birth of Christ (twice no less, in both 1959's *BEN HUR* and 1961's



THE MALTESE FALCON (1941)

horror cheapies of the sixties. Composers likewise flourished in the sheltered hothouse environment of the Golden Age, when studios still took good care of their own. Viennese-born Max Steiner (1888-1971) scored his first cinematic coup with a major score for a certain big ape in 1933, backed up Ms. Crawford in a number of WB forties *noir* melodramas (including *PIERCE*), and wound up underscoring whitebread heartthrobs Troy Donahue and Sandra Dee in the late fifties and early sixties, a fate not quite as ignominious as Joan's, and indeed one which found Mr. Steiner suddenly at the "Top of the Pops" near the end of a long and prolific career. Probably no one was



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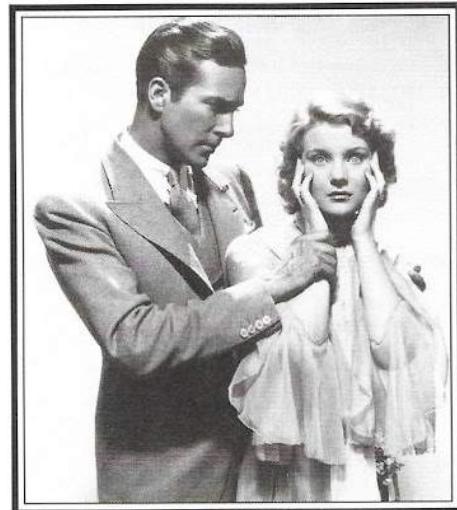
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A new Koch CD, DOUBLE INDEMNITY, showcases new recordings of the title film, THE LOST WEEKEND, and THE KILLERS by James Sedares and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. The three scores, reconstructed by Patrick Russ (with the help of Jon Kull for KILLERS) are organized into sustained cohesive suites, and provide a fine overview of Rozsa's noir period, which also includes such films as BRUTE FORCE and DESERT FURY (both 1947), KISS THE BLOOD OFF MY HANDS (1948), and MGM's atmospheric THE BRIBE (1949). The impressive 33:33 LOST WEEKEND suite utilizes the theremin, which adds a somewhat science-fiction ambience to Billy Wilder's groundbreaking story of an alcoholic's relentless descent into hell. Rozsa's score for KILLERS, heard here in the briefest (11:18) suite of the trio, is probably best known for spawning one of the most famous (and notorious) musical signatures of the fifties, the "dum-da-dum-dum" motif "borrowed" (as the liner notes put it) from the KILLERS score to serve as part of the theme for TV's DRAGNET. Rozsa's motif, signifying the killers in the score, is first heard and developed in the brief Main Title, but survivors of the fifties (familiar with such indelible parodies as Stan Freberg's "St. George and the Dragon Net") may have a tough time getting through "Exit the Killers" with a straight face. (DRAGNET composer Walter Schumann, who composed the magical one-shot score for Charles Laughton's 1955 THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER, did compose the militant second section of the DRAGNET theme. It's reported that, after a lengthy legal battle that was settled out of court, he and Rozsa ultimately shared DRAGNET royalties.)

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Courage, late of MGM), CONFIDENTIAL's music is excellent late Goldsmith, though you can't help feeling he can probably do this kind of score in his sleep by now (and do it well, of course.) I especially like the final cue, "The Victor," which, however, while proving Goldsmith still does this kind of thing better than anyone else around, seems to end too soon and indeed brings the entire album (brief at 30.03) to an abrupt close. There are moments of haunting and sometimes epic lyricism in this score, and echoes of the silvery CHINATOWN trumpet/piano love theme (and of several other musical moments from the Polanski film), but a good deal of L.A. CONFIDENTIAL alternates between agitated passages with a preponderance of Bartokian percussion, and expectantly sustained suspense cues, so musically this new score will probably appeal most to fans of Goldsmith in his agitato/mysterioso modes. Getting back to sources, Rhino has also released the "first-ever" original soundtrack from the classic CASABLANCA, complete with Max Steiner's orchestral score, dialogue scenes, and source music cues.

#### **Murder Is My Beat and Beyond**

Leave it to the folks at Rhino to also give us no less than three great anthologies that take the *noir*/crime genre from the forties into the future, circa the early sixties. MURDER IS MY BEAT: CLASSIC FILM NOIR THEMES AND SCENES gives us both music and dialogue scenes—sometimes more dialogue than music, but what dialogue!—from films ranging from THE LETTER (1940) and THE MALTESE FALCON to THE ASPHALT JUNGLE (1950) and MACAO (1952), over a decade of key and cult *noir*. In many cases, studios did not always lavish their top-drawer composers on what were perceived as emphatically B pictures at the time, and thus we find the work of some less renowned, rarely recorded musicians among the majors on this entertaining disc. Kicking things off is Rozsa's ASPHALT JUNGLE Main Title, a bit of jazzy modernistic brass writing with an ending that suggests (as much Rozsa of this period does) BEN HUR. After the brief Title, the 3.15 track

is mostly a pastiche of dialogue from the film, including a few lines from that certain breathy-voiced blonde. David Raksin is represented by his perennial LAURA (1944) theme, and by one of his finer but lesser-known works, FORCE OF EVIL (1948), with "Bottom of the World," a forward-looking cue that begins with an almost atonal sax solo. (The sax was an instrument that, given its sensual and atmospheric possibilities, oddly enough did not come into its own in Hollywood scoring until the fifties, when it became the virtual voice of sex and sensuality in countless scores.) A sudden mood change about 45 seconds in brings things to a lyrical and ultimately triumphant conclusion, which leaves one wanting to hear more of what the purely instrumental (i.e., no dialogue here) "Bottom of the World" cue suggests is a most excellent score. (I would also like to have heard Raksin's driving Main Title to Preminger's 1945 FALLEN ANGEL among these tracks).

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ro-soundtrack would need to be exhumed. Ergo, we have CRIME JAZZ, in two volumes ("Music in the First and Second Degrees") from Rhino. Though the movement towards the Americanization of Hollywood scoring began prior to 1950, several key fifties scores emphatically turned the tide away from the Euro-symphonic mode of the forties: Alex North's A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, Elmer Bernstein's THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM (1956), and Henry Mancini's TOUCH OF EVIL (1958). Prior to these scores, jazz had hovered around the edges of Hollywood scoring, though, of course, one of the unique characteristics of film music had always been its blending of classical and popular "feels" in a uniquely ineffable fusion. For example, Bronislau Kaper's grandly symphonic score for MGM's GREEN DOLPHIN STREET (1947) resulted in one of the great jazz standards of the forties, the song "On Green Dolphin Street," so in many ways Hollywood always had it both ways, musically. Pop performers had always been key elements in the pre-television world of Hollywood films, but otherwise an authentic pop/jazz mode had been mostly ignored as an element in actual integrated underscoring.

With the fifties and such films as STREETCAR, TOUCH OF EVIL, and even BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S (1961), all this changed, and jazz (eventually pop in all its forms) became a key element in original Hollywood scoring. But, predictably, Hollywood soon felt it could not have too much of a good (or commercially lucrative) thing, and title tune mania, scores by unschooled pop hummers, and eventually scores composed primarily of previously recorded pop tracks (commencing with THE GRADUATE in 1967) soon became the bane of many a Hollywood composer's existence. Still, in its early phase, jazz was a fresh trend, and fanned by TV and its various *noir*-inspired detective/crime dramas, the era from 1950 to 1965 contains some of the most appealing examples of this new Hollywood sound.

Rhino's CRIME JAZZ volumes take up where the mostly orchestral MURDER IS MY BEAT disc left off, while continuing to plumb the depths with a heady mix of the classic and the esoteric (including tracks from TV and LP). Miklos Rozsa's ASPHALT JUNGLE Title, heard again here sans dialogue—these CRIME JAZZ discs are strictly "music only" affairs—provides a point of departure for the new Hollywood. Key tracks include Elmer Bernstein's "Frankie Machine," from his groundbreaking original soundtrack to THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM, the prime example of a jazz based and commercially hot movie theme prior to Mancini's TV PETER GUNN. Two other cues also in a semi-traditional big band mode are from another master of lust set to music, Alex North's steamy "French Quarter" (from A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE) and "Floozy" (from

1955's THE ROSE TATTOO). Both are from North's dynamically engineered RCA Living Stereo jazz showcase, NORTH OF HOLLYWOOD. They're not from the original soundtracks, but they still evoke North's uniquely torrid touch. (Tennessee Williams would no doubt be amused to discover he not only helped pioneer sexual permissiveness in theater and film, but crime jazz as well. Actually this is, let's face it, sex jazz.)

Leith Stevens, best-known for his sleek orchestral scores for George Pal's space operas DESTINATION MOON (1950) and WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE (1951), is represented by an excerpt from another key jazz score, THE WILD ONE



The mob is after them, but Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon manage to skirt the issue in Billy Wilder's hilarious SOME LIKE IT HOT (1959).

(1954), performed here by Shorty Rogers. Stevens is also heard in a cut from one of the most exploitably titled soundtracks on record, Colpix's MUSIC FOR THE WILDEST PARTY EVER FILMED: THE INTERNS! The great Mancini shows up with his own recordings (TOUCH OF EVIL, 1966's ARABESQUE, and television's MR. LUCKY) and in covers from Quincy Jones (PETER GUNN) and Kai Winding (1962's EXPERIMENT IN TERROR). Winding was one of several jazz musicians of the era who successfully crossed-over into Top Ten territory with his bitchin' surfer version of "More," the theme from the 1963 Italian—to borrow a phrase from the late, great Ben Bagley—"shockumentary," MONDO CANE (1963).

One of my personal favorites among the old new masters heard here is Kenyon Hopkins. Hopkins was a disciple of the dualistic sensitive/sleaze school of Alex North, and like North broke into the Hollywood mainstream with two Tennessee Williams scores, BABY DOLL (1956) and THE FUGITIVE KIND (1959). Hopkins also scored Robert Rossen's LILITH (1964), one of Jean Seberg's fin-

est American roles, and one of Pat Boone's rare excursions into cinematic vice, THE YELLOW CANARY (1963). (This even before his heavy metal album!) Composer/arranger Hopkins (who also recorded a concept horror album, NIGHTMARE!, for MGM Records) is represented here by a track from the rare Kapp original soundtrack to Rossen's THE HUSTLER (1961). Opening with a moody English horn solo, "Contract With Depravity" is one of the more atmospheric tracks among the retro-riffs of CRIME JAZZ Volume One, and one of the few examples of the distinctive orchestral/jazz fusion style of the era. Though a secondary presence in the Hollywood of this period, Hopkins merged the tender and the tawdry with a personal touch, and I'd enjoy hearing more of his work, especially his seductively sensual BABY DOLL, on CD.

Rhino also includes a cue from another relatively unknown score ripe for rediscovery, MICKEY ONE (1965), Arthur Penn's cult classic about a confused and put-upon nightclub comedian (Warren Beatty) who runs amok in his attempt to forge a new life. Composed by arranging genius Eddie Sauter (of the famous Sauter-Finegan Orchestra, the uniquely innovative group from the end of the big band era), MICKEY ONE is one of the most authentically improvisational film scores of all time. Soloist Stan Getz's free-floating sax improvs on Sauter's original charts aptly mirror the liberated style of Penn's distinctive translation of *film noir* into the *Nouvelle Vague's* free-wheeling Euro-style.

#### Rhino Retro Rules

From tracks such as "Daddy Long Legs," a cue from PRIVATE HELL 36 (1954) to "Toss Me A Scalpel," Rhino's CRIME JAZZ series blasts off for points even more unknown (or at least scarce since the great days of stereo LPs for \$1.29 in the remainder bins of Woolworth's and Sears). MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM becomes almost neo classic as we cruise on into the outer limits of spaced-out big bands and electrified jazz combos. Yes, Rhino has triumphed again, but then what else would you expect from a label insightful enough to give you the original Five Blobs single of "The Blob" on CD (on ELVIRA PRESENTS HAUNTED HITS from 1988). Both volumes of CRIME JAZZ provide plenty to haunt you all over again: rare original soundtrack cuts, television themes from shows about private eyes with cool names like Johnny Staccato, and LP tracks from such great Living Stereo albums as DOUBLE IMPACT.

Spacy and techno-retro as it all now seems (and is), this is nonetheless the culmination of decades of mainstream American pop. The period encapsulated here was the ebullient, swinging climax

*Continued on page 70*

# Our Man on Baker Street

## By David Stuart Davies

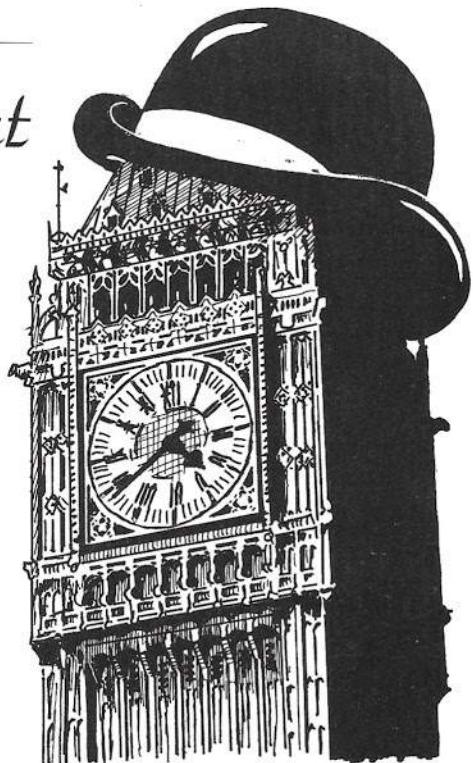
And now, dear reader, in the conclusion of our Ian Richardson interview, we come to the mystery of the two Watsons. It always seemed strange to me that, after spending a great deal of money setting up a series of six Sherlock Holmes films, the producer Sy Weintzraub changed the Watson, David Healy, he used in the first movie (1983's THE SIGN OF FOUR) and replaced him with another actor, Donald Churchill, for THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES (produced the same year). It is even stranger when one considers that Healy gave a pleasing, sympathetic performance and was the very image of the bluff doctor, while Churchill presented an overblown, crass, and crude caricature of Holmes' companion. Like the Great Detective himself, Ian Richardson solved the mystery for me:

"We were all very happy with David's performance, but he was contracted to the National Theatre to play Nicely Nicely Johnson in their production of GUYS AND DOLLS. Now if we'd made THE HOUND at Shepperton, as we did with THE SIGN, this would have been all right. A schedule could have been arranged for him to film during the day while allowing him to get to the theater at night. However, we filmed most of THE HOUND on Dartmoor! Sy Weintzraub was unsympathetic to David's dilemma and got rid of him and put Donald Churchill in his place. And he

gave such a . . . well, Watson is not a silly ass and that's what we got with Churchill."

I observed that one could really believe in the friendship between Holmes and Watson when Healy partnered Richardson's Sherlock. Richardson nodded vigorously:

"This is an insight into theater and acting. When I was really rather important—there's no other modest way of putting it—at the Royal Shakespeare Company, David Healy joined us in a very minor way as understudy to Brewster Mason as Falstaff. (I was playing Ford. It was one of my most popular stage presentations at the RSC.) One day, Brewster Mason was off and David had to play. Now, some of Falstaff's biggest scenes are with Ford and I had to coast him through by putting him into spotlights, moving him around the stage into the right position and so on, helping him to get through it. The point of me telling you this story is that from then on he hero-worshipped me. The sun shone from my nether regions as far as he was concerned. And he brought this hero worship thing, still extent all these years later, with him to the studio when he was playing Watson. So when he looked at me as Holmes, he looked at me in a very special way; whereas Donald Churchill couldn't have given a damn and was doing it because it was just another job. Churchill was too com-



mon. Watson is a man of letters as well as a physician and would not have come out with some of the South London expressions he did."

At this point, Ian Richardson gave an eloquent curl of the lip and a wide stare from his startling blue eyes. There was a moment's pause, one taken, it seemed to me, for the actor to reflect on what he had just said. Then his somewhat stern expression gave way to a smile and a laugh.

"There were quite a few laughs on the set of THE HOUND. [He laughs again as if to underscore this observation.] I remember the director Douglas Hickok had to be stopped from having blood coming out of the mouth of the gargoyles on the Hall. [More laughter.] I said, 'Dougie, why do you want this blood gushing out of the gargoyles?' And he said, 'Well, it adds a touch of the grotesque.' It's also totally unbelievable, of course. He was persuaded to drop the idea. One of the bits I liked best in this movie is when I was disguised as a gypsy. I have a tale to tell you about that.

It was extremely bad weather out on Dartmoor and it was the first time I got into the gypsy outfit. Nobody except the makeup man and the director had seen me in this guise. I was sitting in my caravan waiting to be summoned. The rain was lashing at the windows and the caravan rocked with the wind. And I wondered if there was anywhere I could get a cup of tea. So I stepped outside. Just beside my caravan in the car park was this minibus full of the gypsy extras—the supporting artistes—all waiting to be bussed up to the location. With them was an assistant who, of course, had not seen me before in my new makeup and gypsy outfit. On seeing me, he cried out, 'Ere! You! Get in this effing bus! We've been bleeding-well

Ian Richardson found David Healy to be the superior of his Watsons (the other was Donald Churchill) in his two Sherlock Holmes adventures.





Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson (Ian Richardson and David Healy) scour London for the murderous Jonathan Small in THE SIGN OF FOUR (1983).



waiting for you!' Now, because I've spent years as an actor with the Royal Shakespeare Company, where you're not allowed to be starry or self-important and you're part of an ensemble, I humbly began walking towards this minibus. As it happened, another assistant who was nearby and had seen me emerge from my caravan rushed forward: 'Don't talk to our star like that! This is Mr. Richardson! He's Sherlock Holmes, for Christ's sake!' The other man who shouted at me, fell on his knees into a puddle of water and said, 'Oh, forgive me, guv. Forgive me.'

As I reported in the last issue, the Richardson Holmes series foundered

because of a legal wrangle with Granada Television and the Conan Doyle estate and no further films were made after THE HOUND. However, Richardson told me there was a script written for the third. "It was called THE NAPOLEON OF CRIME and featured Moriarty. I remember it began with a public hanging and I said to Chuck Pogue that public hangings no longer existed in Holmes' time, but he simply wouldn't listen. 'Who will know, who will notice?' seemed to be his motto. Anyhow, the thing wasn't made."

But the thing was made. The third, unfilmed entry in the Richardson series was reworked by the writer Charles

Pogue and filmed in 1989 under the title THE HANDS OF A MURDERER (later retitled SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE PRINCE OF CRIME), with Edward Woodward as the chubbiest, tubbiest Sherlock Holmes on record.

The character of the Great Detective came back into Ian Richardson's life for a fleeting moment in 1986. "Peter Cushing was embarking on a series of films as an elderly Holmes, with John Mills as Dr. Watson. He'd done THE MASKS OF DEATH [a TV movie for Tyburn] and then he became too ill to do the second one, THE ABBOT'S CRY, and so they got in touch with me: would I take the part? I said yes, I'll do it if Sir John Mills is prepared to go very much down-market compared with the great Peter Cushing. Sir John said he was delighted and he'd love to do it. But sadly, it never happened. But you know, when Peter—such a sweet man—heard I was going to take over, he invited my wife and I to his house in Whitstable. We had a wonderful lunch. He was so nice and then we began sending each other Christmas cards and he would send me little notes when he saw me on television. He told me that when he played Holmes he absolutely hated smoking the pipe: it made him sick. I am so glad he got his OBE before he left us."

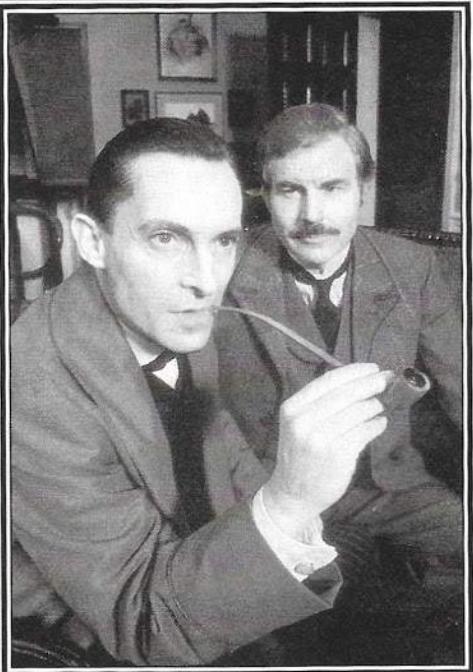
As I collected my gear ready to leave, conscious that curtain time was grow-

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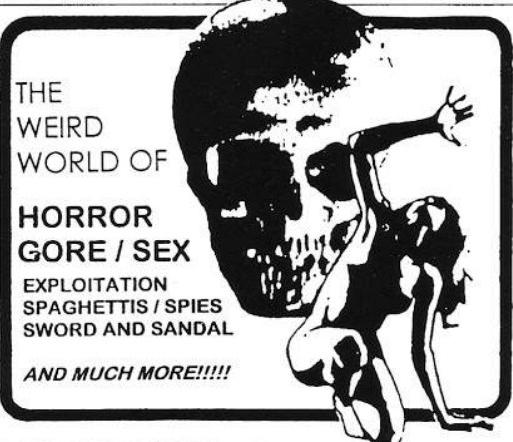


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ing ever nearer, I wondered if there was any chance of Ian Richardson playing Sherlock Holmes again. "It's funny you should say that, but about 20 years ago the script for a stage play by Charles Marowitz landed on my desk: SHERLOCK'S LAST CASE. It's about Watson growing so bored with his supercilious companion that he determines to kill him. Well, at the time I thought I was too young for the part as presented in the play. Now the film has come back as a possible film treatment. And they're wondering if David Jason would play Watson with myself as Holmes. The two of us were in a thing called PORTERHOUSE BLUE—I played the master of the college and he played the porter—and they thought it would be good to pair us up again and do this as a film, maybe as a cinema film. But it's only vague as yet. However, if they don't hurry up I shall be too old to play the part!" Here he threw back his head and let rip with a guffaw that echoed around the lofty dressing room.

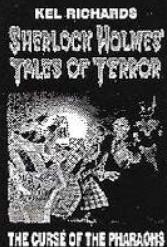
I left Ian Richardson still contemplating the idea that he may be too old to play Holmes by the time the film gets off the ground. He was still chuckling at it as I ascended the stairs that led from his dressing room out into the crowded Strand again, not very far from Simpson's where Holmes and Watson dined on occasion. I hope Ian Richardson is able to have another crack at old Sherlock. With the right script and the right cast, it could be a very memorable performance indeed.



The Hound of Hell makes short work of Sir Hugo Baskerville (Nicholas Clay) in **THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES** (1983). The telling of the legend was superb, rivaled only by the 1959 Hammer film, but the Sy Weintraub production suffered from a poor Watson and some completely unnecessary additions to the original story by scenarist Charles Pogue.

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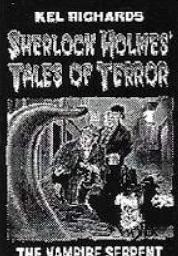
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# *Dark Passages: The World of Film Noir*

World War II changed everything. After the incredibly difficult years of the Depression, the horrors of the war in Europe and Japan set the country in a different direction forever; Americans learned exactly how horribly humans can treat each other, while also learning the truest meanings of resolve and strength. A tone of uncertainty and disillusioned cynicism tempered the relief and optimism that came with the end of the war. By the late forties, Joe McCarthy would wave his sheet of "card-carrying Communists" and introduced anti-Communist paranoia into

Intro by Jerry Renshaw

Contributions by John F. Black  
Michael Brunas

Ken Hanke

Brooke Perry

Jerry Renshaw

Michael Spampinato

Richard Valley

the fabric of society. The United States was suddenly the most powerful country on earth, and was a nation plagued by growing pains; Hollywood reflected these changes in consciousness as a new sort of movie began to evolve. Informed by the traditions of thirties gangster and social-consciousness films (as well as the American hard-boiled school of detective fiction by such writers as Chandler,

Cain, Hammett, Woolrich, and McCoy), these movies began to expand on the traditional crime genre and blur the black-and-white morality of those conventions.

The war saw many directors, cinematographers, art directors, and actors fleeing Germany as intellectuals came under attack by the Nazi regime and the UFA studios were taken over by Hitler's propaganda machine. They brought with them the expressionistic style of earlier German film and infused their Hollywood work with it; the new films from such directors as Edward Dmytryk, Fritz Lang, and Robert Siodmak featured a heavy interplay of light and shadow that heightened the gloomy frame of mind that went with the stories (while simultaneously harkening back to such European classics as 1919's *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*, 1922's *DR. MABUSE*, and 1931's *M*). Cinematographers such as Hungarian-born John Alton, Karl Freund, and George Diskant understood perfectly the intentions of their directors and helped them redefine film language with their lighting, camera angles, and editing. Its most extreme stylistic examples found rooms divided by jagged, angular patterns of light, oblique shadows splintering the frame, grimy city streets and alleys slick with fresh rain that never seems to wash away the fatalistic urban milieu. By 1946, the emerging French schools of film criticism had studied the new sort of film from the U.S.A. and given it a name: *film noir*.

Every 10 years or so, *noir* undergoes a resurgence in interest and a reexamination, with films as varied and diverse as *BLOOD SIMPLE* (1984), *THE GRIFTERS* (1990), *SEVEN* (1995), the remade *KISS OF DEATH* (1995), *L.A. CONFIDENTIAL* (1997), and even *BLADE RUNNER* (1982) being dubbed "modern day *noir*"—a tortured notion, since to purists the ideas of color film and *noir* are mutually exclusive. Such comparisons come about, though, because *noir* has always been a fairly unwieldy term; even during the forties and fifties, films from other genres bore the stylistic and thematic earmarks of *noir* due to its popularity. The fatalism, moral ambiguity, and constantly shifting surface reality of *noir* crime films found its way into the occasional Western and other films.

As far as definitions go, *noir* is almost more of a mood and atmosphere than a style or genre. The great part of that phenomenon for film buffs and students, though, is that since it was such a popular and predominant visual style, the film vaults swell with titles of *noirish* films from the period, from such high-budget, high-profile work as *THE KILLERS* (1946), *OUT OF THE PAST* (1947), and *DETECTIVE STORY* (1951) to more obscure, low-budget B quickies such as Anthony Mann's excellent *T-MEN* (1947), *RAIL-ROADED* (1947), *HE WALKED BY NIGHT* (1948), *RAW DEAL* (1948), *PORT OF NEW YORK* (1949), and *AR-*

*MORED CAR ROBBERY* (1950). Considering the shoestring budgets and tight shooting schedules they were constrained with, many of the cheapies featured amazing stylistic flourishes, as well as strong stories and performances by such actors as John Ireland, Dennis O'Keefe, and Wallace Ford, all of whom definitely fell into the B category. Unfortunately, modern audiences may never get to see many of those more obscure titles, as they stay in the vaults, never released on video.

Films from the earlier part of the *noir* period drew heavily from the hard-boiled school of detective fiction and were often film adaptations of novels—*THE MALTESE FALCON* (1941), based on the 1930 Dashiell Hammett novel; *THE GLASS KEY* (1942), based on the 1931 Hammett novel; *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* (1944), based on the 1943 James Cain novelette; *MURDER, MY SWEET* (1944), based on Chandler's *Farewell My Lovely* (1940, and filmed under that title in 1975); *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946), based on the 1939 Raymond Chandler novel. World-weary gumshoes clamped their fedoras on their heads, unraveled mysteries, wielded automatics, and dealt with treacherous dames. The lone-wolf traditions of detective fiction were well suited to classier directors such as Michael Curtiz, Howard Hawks, and Tay Garnett, as well as such established stars as Bogart, Bacall, Ladd, and Lake; films from that period also relied more heavily on talk than action, but nonetheless started to establish a stylistic and thematic groundwork for the films that would follow.

The postwar period found *noir* moving in a more neurotic and cynical direction; themes often dealt with urban corruption, police procedural quasi-documentary stories, the troubles of the returning war veteran, and the beginnings of psychosexual overtones. *CALL NORTH-SIDE 777* (1948), *NIGHT AND THE CITY* (1950), and *UNION STATION* (1950) featured an interesting combination of police-procedural realism and highly stylized set design and camera work by such directors as Jules Dassin, Rudolph Maté, and Henry Hathaway. *THE KILLERS* and *GUN CRAZY* (1949) explored



the despair and sexual tension that would point the direction that *noir* would take in the next few years. Under the weight of 10 years of desperation and introspective gloom, the *noir* protagonist seemed to come a little unglued.

By the fifties, *noir* would take a decidedly more violent and sociologically aware turn with directors Nicholas Ray, Don Siegel, and Stanley Kubrick coming into their own. Billy Wilder's incredibly dark *ACE IN THE HOLE* (1951) plumbed the depths of cynicism as reporter Kirk Douglas manipulates a news story for his own ends, which leads to a man's death. In Rudolph Maté's *D.O.A.* (1950), fifties everyman Edmond O'Brien plays out the ultimate fatalistic endgame as he spends his dying hours tracking down the



PAGE 58 LEFT: Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall re-teamed for Howard Hawks' *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946). It was claimed that even the director couldn't figure out who had committed one of the murders. PAGE 58 RIGHT: Two of the blondest and shortest stars in Hollywood met for the first time in *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* (1942): Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake. LEFT: Dana Andrews and Clifton Webb were the men in the life of Gene Tierney as *LAURA* (1944). BELOW: John Garfield and Lana Turner burned up the screen in *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE* (1946).

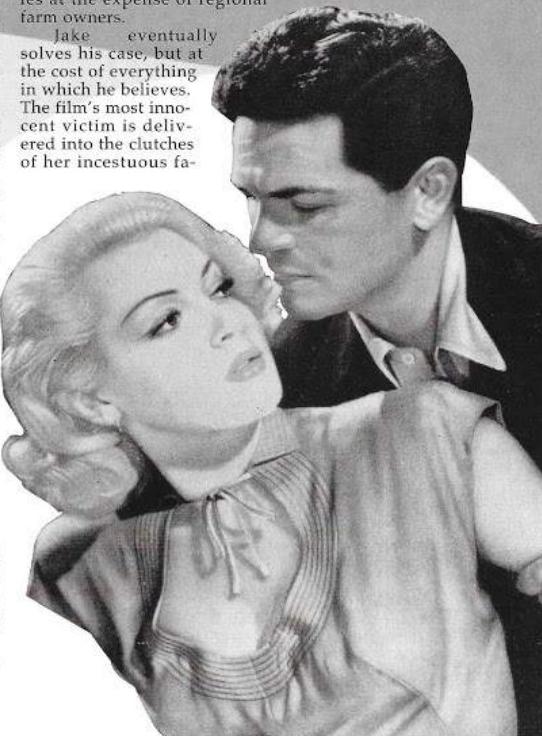
#### CHINATOWN (1974)

Scholars have opined that the film noir tradition, which reached its zenith in the late forties, was nurtured by a malaise which crept into the American psyche as the second World War was winding down. Roman Polanski's *CHINATOWN* (1974) was a comparatively later production to be set in the Los Angeles of the late thirties. Polanski augmented Robert Towne's screenplay, employing the period milieu to provide an ironic "modern" distillation of the growing distrust of traditional institutions.

Jack Nicholson portrays Jake Gittes, a private matrimonial detective who had previously served as a patrolman in the Chinatown district. He resigned from the force upon realizing that he wasn't supposed to actively abate criminal activity—so long as it was confined to that neighborhood.

Jake is a bulldog. He faithfully plods along doing his best, but without always comprehending the whole picture. His current assignment puts him on the trail of Hollis Mulwray (Darrell Zwerling), an L.A. water commissioner. Jake soon discovers that the man had uncovered a plot to divert water during a manufactured drought in the San Fernando Valley. The perpetrators are wealthy real estate speculators maneuvering to empower the city of Los Angeles at the expense of regional farm owners.

Jake eventually solves his case, but at the cost of everything in which he believes. The film's most innocent victim is delivered into the clutches of her incestuous fa-



man who killed him. Robert Aldrich's *KISS ME DEADLY* (1955) finds Ralph Meeker playing Mike Hammer as a sadistic neo-Fascist Neanderthal thug who bitch-slaps anyone who dares stand in his way and takes the concept of the antihero to a truly despicable level. Late-period directors Phil Karlson, Siegel, Kubrick, and Sam Fuller introduced more violence into their films and gradually began to infuse the crime film with a cooler, more detached look that would point the way to such fifties TV shows as *RICHARD DIAMOND, HIGHWAY PATROL, M SQUAD*, and *DRAGNET*, as well as sixties-style crime films such as *POINT BLANK* (1967).

The *noir* period was wildly creative, as well as being an excellent example of art reflecting life and Hollywood holding a mirror up to American society. Many of the films of the period have held up admirably over the years and are still very entertaining to watch, as well as having left a lingering resonance on movies to follow. The stylized landscape of *noir* can be summed up with a quote from Raymond Chandler: "It is not a very fragrant world, but is the world you live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make very interesting patterns out of it."

Here are some dark, rain-swept looks at a few respected films that are representative of the various periods in the development of *noir*.

#### THE BIG SLEEP (1946)

One of the established classics of *noir*, Howard Hawks' *THE BIG SLEEP* is also one of the most impossibly convoluted and confusing films of its genre. Even many of those involved admitted to not knowing what the film was all about. Why? Quite simply, the idea of filming Raymond Chandler's novel (arguably his best) was close to insane in 1946. The plot, circuitous enough in the book, deals with pornography, drugs (both are touched on, but the drug angle consists of Humphrey Bogart suspiciously sniffing a glass and the pornography is limited to a photo session that looks about as wild as the cheesecake of the era, to which most movie actresses were subjected), homosexuality, nymphomania, and other decidedly code objectionable material, most of which were simply written out of the film. (Strangely, although the homosexual angle of the story was

jettisoned, the film did manage to include a comic sequence in which Bogart masquerades as a very swishy book collector. Presumably, it was okay to touch on this topic for a laugh, but not okay to address it in any serious capacity.)

In place of the more censorable aspects of the novel, Hawks and writers William Faulkner, Leigh Brackett, and Jules Furthman concentrated on the onscreen chemistry of Bogart and Lauren Bacall, creating a more sexualized version of the typical Hawksian male/female relationship he had specialized in since *TWENTIETH CENTURY* (1934).

Quite the strangest aspect of the film, though, was the decision to jettison the trademark Philip Marlowe narration. Surely, this was a move that only served to make the already impossible storyline just that much more difficult to follow. In this respect, *THE BIG SLEEP*, as an evocation of Chandler, seems even more experimental than Robert Montgomery's *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946) with its all-subjective camera treatment! Ironically, though, the film manages to capture some of the flavor of Chandler—more so than Michael Winner's 1978 version (a film that did have the distinction of once being cited as Jimmy Carter's favorite movie), which preserved all of the plot and the narration, but lost the atmosphere by updating the story and setting it in England.

—Ken Hanke

#### LAURA (1944)

During the preproduction of *LAURA*, it was no secret that Darryl F. Zanuck and Rouben Mamoulian, the film's initial director, didn't get along. Zanuck especially disagreed over the casting of Clifton Webb as the devious, megalomaniac columnist Waldo Lydecker. Mamoulian stood his ground. The result: Webb was in. Mamoulian was out, replaced by Otto Preminger (with whom Zanuck also didn't get along during production). Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney, and Vincent Price notwithstanding, Webb was arguably the best creative decision made about the film. His portrayal is delicious, displaying a depth that would have suffered easily in the hands of anyone else.

When we first meet Lydecker, the associations made with French Revolutionist Jean-Paul Marat are not only obvious, they fit all too perfectly. As Marat would sit in his bathtub penning revolt-inciting pamphlets for the popu-

lace, so too does Waldo Lydecker attack the social elements of his own civilization from a semi-aquatic environment. Here, Webb presents Lydecker as the apex of the social scene, the epitome of elitism, and a verbal scorpion whose stinging wit can kill.

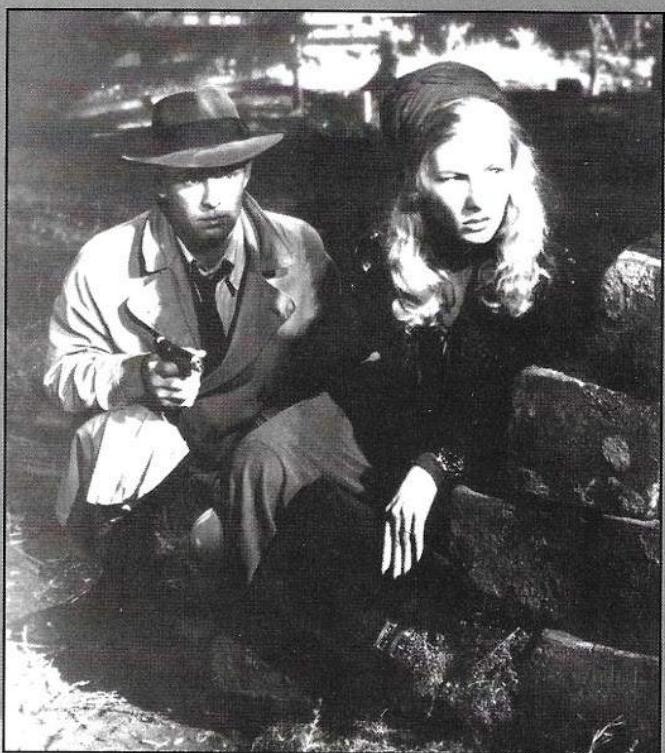
Webb's physical mannerisms greatly define Lydecker. Notice the bits of character business later in this scene, as Webb dresses himself while conversing with Dana Andrews. Everything he does (knitting his tie, folding his pocket kerchief, snapping the flower's stem for his lapel) is precisely timed with the lines and brilliantly executed.

Webb uses definitive character business again in the flashback sequence where he first encounters Laura Hunt in a restaurant. During the conversation, Lydecker is clearly occupied with his meal. He breaks off a piece of bread and butter it, he adjusts his silverware, he removes a garnish from his plate with just a wince of irritation. As before, Webb's business turns a potentially flat dialogue exchange into a vibrant scene by demonstrating that Lydecker's table manners are as meticulous and premeditated as the newspaper column he writes.

One final bit worth mentioning comes when Lydecker appears at the ad agency where Laura works, to apologize for the restaurant incident. As he enters the office, he notices a teenage boy sitting at a desk. To get the boy's attention, Lydecker lays the ornate walking stick he brandishes on the boy's shoulder as he speaks to him. Webb's clever use of the prop says more about Lydecker than any single line of dialogue he utters here. In this one small movement of his arm, he is clearly established as the superior focus of attention in the scene.

While many articles and books have rightfully praised Clifton Webb's performance in *LAURA*, very few have ever discussed the unique personal mannerisms he invested in making Lydecker such a vibrant and memorable character. The dialogue and the plot serve as the framework in which the character establishes his existence, but the bits and pieces of business create a sense of depth for both the character and the actor. Perhaps if Preminger had gotten Webb to lay his walking stick upon Darryl Zanuck, the production process would have been a bit easier for everyone involved.

—Brooke Perry



man who killed him. Robert Aldrich's *KISS ME DEADLY* (1955) finds Ralph Meeker playing Mike Hammer as a sadistic neo-Fascist Neanderthal thug who bitch-slaps anyone who dares stand in his way and takes the concept of the antihero to a truly despicable level. Late-period directors Phil Karlson, Siegel, Kubrick, and Sam Fuller introduced more violence into their films and gradually began to infuse the crime film with a cooler, more detached look that would point the way to such fifties TV shows as *RICHARD DIAMOND, HIGHWAY PATROL, M SQUAD*, and *DRAGNET*, as well as sixties-style crime films such as *POINT BLANK* (1967).

The *noir* period was wildly creative, as well as being an excellent example of art reflecting life and Hollywood holding a mirror up to American society. Many of the films of the period have held up admirably over the years and are still very entertaining to watch, as well as having left a lingering resonance on movies to follow. The stylized landscape of *noir* can be summed up with a quote from Raymond Chandler: "It is not a very fragrant world, but is the world you live in, and certain writers with tough minds and a cool spirit of detachment can make very interesting patterns out of it."

Here are some dark, rain-swept looks at a few respected films that are representative of the various periods in the development of *noir*.

#### THE BIG SLEEP (1946)

One of the established classics of *noir*, Howard Hawks' *THE BIG SLEEP* is also one of the most impossibly convoluted and confusing films of its genre. Even many of those involved admitted to not knowing what the film was all about. Why? Quite simply, the idea of filming Raymond Chandler's novel (arguably his best) was close to insane in 1946. The plot, circuitous enough in the book, deals with pornography, drugs (both are touched on, but the drug angle consists of Humphrey Bogart suspiciously sniffing a glass and the pornography is limited to a photo session that looks about as wild as the cheesecake of the era, to which most movie actresses were subjected), homosexuality, nymphomania, and other decidedly code objectionable material, most of which were simply written out of the film. (Strangely, although the homosexual angle of the story was

jettisoned, the film did manage to include a comic sequence in which Bogart masquerades as a very swishy book collector. Presumably, it was okay to touch on this topic for a laugh, but not okay to address it in any serious capacity.)

In place of the more censorable aspects of the novel, Hawks and writers William Faulkner, Leigh Brackett, and Jules Furthman concentrated on the onscreen chemistry of Bogart and Lauren Bacall, creating a more sexualized version of the typical Hawksian male/female relationship he had specialized in since *TWENTIETH CENTURY* (1934).

Quite the strangest aspect of the film, though, was the decision to jettison the trademark Philip Marlowe narration. Surely, this was a move that only served to make the already impossible storyline just that much more difficult to follow. In this respect, *THE BIG SLEEP*, as an evocation of Chandler, seems even more experimental than Robert Montgomery's *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946) with its all-subjective camera treatment! Ironically, though, the film manages to capture some of the flavor of Chandler—more so than Michael Winner's 1978 version (a film that did have the distinction of once being cited as Jimmy Carter's favorite movie), which preserved all of the plot and the narration, but lost the atmosphere by updating the story and setting it in England.

—Ken Hanke

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PAGE 58 LEFT: Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall re-teamed for Howard Hawks' *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946). It was claimed that even the director couldn't figure out who had committed one of the murders. PAGE 58 RIGHT: Two of the blondest and shortest stars in Hollywood met for the first time in *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* (1942): Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake. LEFT: Dana Andrews and Clifton Webb were the men in the life of Gene Tierney as *LAURA* (1944). BELOW: John Garfield and Lana Turner burned up the screen in *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE* (1946).

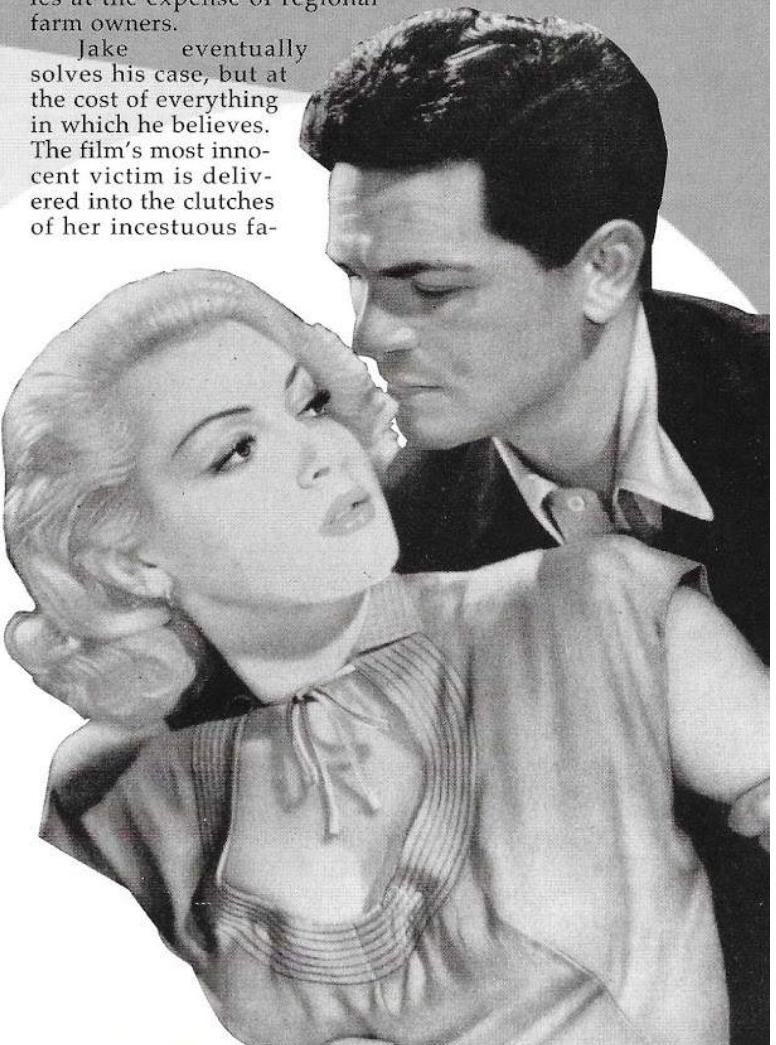
#### CHINATOWN (1974)

Scholars have opined that the film noir tradition, which reached its zenith in the late forties, was nurtured by a malaise which crept into the American psyche as the second World War was winding down. Roman Polanski's *CHINATOWN* (1974) was a comparatively later production to be set in the Los Angeles of the late thirties. Polanski augmented Robert Towne's screenplay, employing the period milieu to provide an ironic "modern" distillation of the growing distrust of traditional institutions.

Jack Nicholson portrays Jake Gittes, a private matrimonial detective who had previously served as a patrolman in the Chinatown district. He resigned from the force upon realizing that he wasn't supposed to actively abate criminal activity—so long as it was confined to that neighborhood.

Jake is a bulldog. He faithfully plods along doing his best, but without always comprehending the whole picture. His current assignment puts him on the trail of Hollis Mulwray (Darrell Zwerling), an L.A. water commissioner. Jake soon discovers that the man had uncovered a plot to divert water during a manufactured drought in the San Fernando Valley. The perpetrators are wealthy real estate speculators maneuvering to empower the city of Los Angeles at the expense of regional farm owners.

Jake eventually solves his case, but at the cost of everything in which he believes. The film's most innocent victim is delivered into the clutches of her incestuous fa-





LEFT: Edward G. Robinson predicts that Gail Russell (clinging to John Lund) will meet a gruesome death under the stars in *NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES* (1948). RIGHT: The mirror shot allows the viewer to see not only Audrey Totter, but the "subjective camera," Robert Montgomery in *LADY IN THE LAKE* (1946).

ther (John Huston), who is also the primary instigator of the diverted water scheme. An operative consoles him: "Forget it, Jake, it's Chinatown." But Jake finally understands that the corruption that has been permitted to fester in that ethnic community has encroached into the highest echelons of Los Angeles' civic management. Even the proprietors of the very land on which the city resides have become diseased.

Initially, CHINATOWN was planned to culminate with a "feel good" ending. Nicholson and leading lady Faye Dunaway (as Evelyn Mulwray) were scripted to vanquish the Mephistophelean Noah Cross (Huston). But director Roman Polanski preferred a bleaker resolution, and fought Paramount to include it.

Not coincidentally, the Watergate revelations of 1972 had fanned the flames of distrust regarding the machinations of high ranking legislative officials. The still continuing Vietnam War, and its underlying governmental motivations, was also a source of public debate.

Polanski utilized the film's source material to tap into his "modern" conception of American malaise, as deftly as the vintage forties noir productions had symbolized their era's postwar traumas. His depiction of Chinatown as a metaphorical heart of darkness mirrors the literal atomic explosion that threatens humankind at the climax of Robert Aldrich's *KISS ME DEADLY* (1955). Aldrich's film displayed American culture evidencing signs of decay well before the actual unleashing of the stolen radioactive material. Polanski shares his vision of societal implosion. CHINATOWN is not as apocalyptic as was *KISS ME DEADLY*, but it nevertheless offers an equally powerful image of contamination.

—John F. Black

#### THIS GUN FOR HIRE (1942)

Alan Ladd plays the eponymous "gun for hire" (from the 1936 Graham Greene novel) as Phillip Raven, a young assassin hired to commit a murder. Raven pulls off the job, but is paid off in hot money, leading the police to him. In the process of trying to exact his revenge for being set up, he becomes involved with Ellen Graham (Veronica Lake) and a Nazi espionage ring.

The plot is a little overly intricate and owes a debt to Hitchcock in that respect, as well as in stylistic flourishes, particularly a chase in railroad freight yards on a foggy night. *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* was another seminal *noir* work, with Ladd as an alienated, loner protagonist; his character bore some Freudian rationales that gave him more depth than the gangsters of thirties melodramas. Unfortunately, the film also shows its age more than other



*noirs* of the period. The musical interludes by Lake tend to drag down the pace, and the propaganda subtext definitely serves to put a date on things. Ladd was at best a limited actor (Chandler described him as "a very small boy's idea of a tough guy") and at worst as expressive as a sheet of plywood. At least he was well-suited to the terse lines in this film, often worthy of Hammett in their succinctness. Raven's motivations, however, aren't out of any love for God and country; he simply tries to do right by himself first, and the only woman who ever treated him with kindness second. In fact, the only other being in the world who he feels any attachment to is his cat.

Despite its weaknesses, though, *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* stands on its own as a solid mystery-thriller that helped set up some conventions for the *noir* genre.

—Jerry Renshaw

#### NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES (1948)

He's a nobody, a nonentity, and therein lies the irony of Jeremiah Tompkins' sorry little life, for Tompkins is a man with an amazing gift—the gift, as it's called by Mrs. McGuire, his lifelong friend and neighbor—and it has almost completely cut him off from contact with his fellow man. Commonplace in appearance, his voice emotionless unless he is provoked, Tompkins lives in a dark, shabby flat on a lower-middle-class street in a nameless city under a starry night sky. But from that unprepossessing vantage point, the nobody sees everything—tragic airplane disasters, near-fatal car accidents, sudden stock market booms—and he sees it before it occurs.

Wanting nothing more than to live in seedy obscurity, Tompkins is drawn out of his twilight world by a fateful encounter with lovely Jean Reid and her dynamic millionaire father, Harlan, whose fortunes Tompkins improves and whose death—" . . . on the seam between the fourteenth and the fifteenth of June . . . at midnight on the stroke . . . at the jaws of a lion . . ."—he predicts.

That's the plot of Cornell Woolrich's classic thriller *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1945), which was much altered for its 1948 film version. Jeremiah Tompkins is gone, replaced by John Triton (Edward G. Robinson), one of a long line of phony spiritualists whose powers prove frighteningly real. Jean Reid becomes Jean Courtland (Gail Russell), and her ill-omened father, Whitney (Jerome Cowan), dies in that prophesied plane crash. It is left to doe-eyed Jean to face doom under the cold, cruel stars at midnight.

As directed by John Farrow, *NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES* hasn't the nail-biting suspense of the Woolrich original, but neither does it lack "almost all of its power

and terror" as claimed by Woolrich biographer Francis M. Nevins Jr. Robinson, drawing to a close his best decade in films, is in top form as Triton, and Russell, as always, practically has "victim" stamped on her forehead. The film actually goes the novel one better by placing her star-crossed demise under the "thousand eyes" of the title; in Woolrich, Jean's starlit terror meant only that another day had passed, and that night had arrived, bringing ever closer a dreadful and inescapable fate.

—Richard Valley

#### THE KILLERS (1946)

Robert Siodmack's 1946 *THE KILLERS* (aka *A MAN ALONE*), based on a Hemingway short story of the same name, may be justifiably regarded as a classic of *noir*. The photography, the characters, the lighting, the circumstances are certainly the stuff *noir* is made of—but it is the telling of the story that sets the film apart. Hired killers Al and Max (Charles McGraw and William Conrad) hit a small-town diner, seeking gas station attendant Ole "the Swede" Anderson (Burt Lancaster in his film debut), a man who "did something wrong . . . once." Terse dialogue, tight framing, the almost claustrophobic confines of a roadside diner, and Miklos Rozsa's dynamic music highlight this opening sequence, which could stand on its own as a stunning short and which comprises the majority of Hemingway's short story.

A \$2,500 life insurance policy and a green silk scarf, all that survive the Swede's murder, are sufficient to generate an investigation by insurance man Jim Reardon (Edmond O'Brien). Assisted by police lieutenant Lubinsky (Sam Levene), Reardon pieces together six years of the Swede's life from professional boxer to criminal. Falling in love with femme fatale Kitty Collins (Ava Gardner), the Swede takes a rap in her stead and spends three years in jail for his efforts. Upon his release, he joins with a group of former cronies and Kitty in planning and executing a quarter of a million-dollar payroll heist.

Double cross plays on double cross as the events leading up to the Swede's fall are revealed in disjointed, out-of-sequence flashbacks. The viewer is almost forced into the Swede's mindset, trying to piece together the hows and whys. The viewer's involvement is enhanced by Lancaster's performance. His Swede is a calm, almost gentle man, a man we can understand and empathize with, whose biggest error is falling in love with a woman who, to save herself, would "ask a man to lie his soul into hell."

—Michael Spampinato

#### LADY IN THE LAKE (1946)

This exercise in *film noir* was adapted from the novel by Raymond Chandler. Robert Montgomery directed, as well as portraying gumshoe Philip Marlowe. Montgomery chose to photograph his production from a subjective "first person" perspective. In other words, the viewing audience becomes the detective, with all of the supporting cast performing directly into the camera.

The plot of *LADY IN THE LAKE* unfold during the last few days before Christmas. Marlowe has been summoned to the office of a magazine syndicate which peddles lurid collections such as *True Horror Tales*. He is subsequently hired to dig up a missing woman.

Marlowe's serpentine path winds through various archetypes of the *noir* tradition: distressed women, molasses-voiced playboys, mistaken identities, fresh corpses, and red

herrings. He eventually solves the case, something which astute patrons have probably already achieved.

Despite the assorted plot threads, *LADY IN THE LAKE* is rarely hard-boiled. Montgomery's characterization, primarily conveyed through narrative voiceovers, is essentially one of wisecracking banter. The other actors appear as foils for the laconic sleuth. Female lead Audrey Totter occasionally employs exaggerated facial expressions, as though emoting to the last row of the balcony, but it is clearly what director Montgomery wanted for his first-person style.

Montgomery's experiment with subjective cinematography is only partially successful. Some of his sequences are vivid, while others drone on the point of monotony. The technique teases as a novelty, but the cumulative effect is the impression of watching a filmed play.

The first person concept might have seemed more revolutionary if we were never permitted to glimpse the Marlowe character. But Montgomery has hedged his bets, by revealing his own face whenever he passes a mirror. He retreats even further with cutaway scenes of himself in his office, lecturing the audience. Possibly, the executive producers decided to dilute the filmmaker's technique. The resultant film remains amusing, but falls short of being truly avant-garde.

One facet of *LADY IN THE LAKE* which evidences no compromise is the musical score (or lack thereof). The opening credit crawl, displayed on Christmas cards, is underscored by a medley of seasonal carols. The remainder of the picture features a non-rhythmic, atonal vocal chorus. Arguably, this stark use of unpredictable musical motifs signifies the darkest element of Montgomery's "vision."

Recently released on MGM/UA laserdisc (Two Sides CLV; \$39.95), *LADY IN THE LAKE* has been struck from a crisp print, although the contrast between black and white is occasionally subdued. There are periodic instances of speckling, and minor focusing inconsistencies. But given the age of the materials, the transfer is satisfactory.

The laserdisc offers no supplemental features. I wish that MGM had supplied an original theatrical trailer preview. It would be fun to see how the studio maneuvered to sell the look of the production to forties filmgoers. Perhaps a peek at a vintage poster's hyperbole provides a clue: "You accept an invitation to a blonde's apartment! You get socked in the jaw by a murder suspect!"

*LADY IN THE LAKE* will never be counted among the classics of film *noir*. Yet, it is sufficiently experimental and fastidious to provide a real hoot for genre completists—especially those who have always wanted to be slapped around by Lloyd Nolan!

—John F. Black

#### PORT OF NEW YORK (1949)

War on Drugs, 1949-style. Yul Brynner, in his screen debut, plays Vicola, the head of a drug-smuggling operation. A shipment of pharmaceutical opiates heading in by ship turns out to be crates filled with sand, putting customs on a search for the real shipment. The corpse of the ship's purser is fished out of the East River, and more corpses soon start turning up as a game of cat-and-mouse ensues between the gangsters and the feds. One agent is shot by the crooks and dumped overboard when he's discovered in their hideout on an undercover mission; another agent (Brady) goes undercover to try to get all the way to Vicola.



THE BIG CLOCK (1948)



LEFT: Who's shadowing who? Humphrey Bogart (as Sam Spade) and Elisha Cook Jr. play games in **THE MALTESE FALCON** (1941). RIGHT: Otto Kruger and Mike Mazurki are afraid Dick Powell (as Philip Marlowe) might sing in **MURDER, MY SWEET** (1944).

Semidocumentary police procedurals became quite popular for awhile in the late forties, with lots of location shooting and official-sounding voiceovers. *PORT OF NEW YORK* follows in the style of *HOUSE ON 92ND STREET* (1945) and Jules Dassin's *THE NAKED CITY* (1948), with a fair amount of suspense and plenty of violent fisticuffs. George Diskant brings his striking camera work to bear as well; sometimes the "dark film" is so dark it's hard to even see what's going on!

Most notable, however, is Brynner's first film role; he plays Vicola with sleek menace and self-assured evil—and with a full head of hair, too! Though not an outstanding film, *PORT OF NEW YORK* is well-suited to its subject matter and has been rather neglected for years.

—Jerry Renshaw

#### THE BIG CLOCK (1948)

One of the overlooked little gems of *film noir*, *THE BIG CLOCK* is a top-flight blend of scripting, acting, directing, and scoring. Its credentials are impeccable—a solidly suspenseful screenplay by Jonathan Latimer (demonstrating the same gift for incorporating genuinely funny comic relief into the mystery/crime format that he evidenced in his Bill Crane "Crime Club" mystery novels), a superb cast headed by Ray Milland (from his finest period), Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Sullivan, George Macready, Elsa Lanchester, and Rita Johnson, atmospheric direction by John Farrow, and a nigh on to perfect Victor Young musical score. Always an admired film, *THE BIG CLOCK*, however, has often been left out of the pantheon of truly great examples of *film noir*. The reason, I suspect, comes down to one simple fact—it's just too damned much fun. Latimer's script plays by the rules of the genre, but never quite takes them too seriously, making the end result a kind of *noir* romp, if such can be imagined.

The film starts off in perfect *noir* fashion with Milland, a man on the run ("How did I get into this rat race anyhow? I'm no criminal. What happened? When did it all start?"), hiding inside the big clock of the title, telling his story in flashback for the bulk of the film. However, once the proceedings are underway, the narration is jettisoned in favor of a more straightforward narrative technique—almost as if the opening was a perfunctory nod to the convention. All of the elements are there—an innocent man (Milland) taking a wrong turning and finding himself a victim of circumstances in an ever-tightening web of deceit, a powerful figure (Laughton) controlling events from behind the scenes, a magnificently creepy henchman (Henry "Harry" Morgan in a mute characterization), much nighttime action on city

streets, shadowy interiors, etc. Where *THE BIG CLOCK* makes its most unusual turn in its approach to these genre staples lies in the comic tone of the supporting characters we encounter during the investigation, especially Elsa Lanchester as a delightfully screwy modern artist (an off-screen crash of an investigating art critic is met with her delighted observation to her daughter, "Oh, Penelope, you forgot to put away your roller skates!") and Lloyd Corrigan as a ham radio actor.

Despite the comedic slant, the storyline is a splendid take on the *noir* tradition—quite by accident, *Crimeways* magazine editor becomes involved with his boss's (Laughton) mistress. When Laughton murders her in a fit of jealousy, he tries to cover the crime by pinning it on an unknown man with whom she spent the earlier part of the evening. Unknown to Laughton, the man in question is Milland, who is, of course, put in charge of the investigation! Not only does this ironic twist allow Milland to watch the evidence amass against him, but it affords him the opportunity to attempt to muddy the waters and catch glimpses of the truth as he spots Laughton's own efforts at manipulating the truth. In the hands of Fritz Lang, this could have been the grimdest of dramas. Instead, John Farrow and Jonathan Latimer give us a playful and thoroughly beguiling work that is every bit as good on its own terms and deserving of far more attention than it has thus far received.

—Ken Hanke

#### THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW (1944)

A recent MGM/UA laserdisc release (Two Sides CLV; \$39.98), *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* suffers from slight graininess and uneven contrast. It is apparent that MGM/UA was forced to use a composite print for their transfer.

Upon landing on these shores, Fritz Lang quickly established himself as a voice of social consciousness. Even under this guise, the German director of *M* (1931) continued to probe the nature of innocence and guilt in *FURY* (1936), *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE* (1937), and *THE RETURN OF FRANK JAMES* (1940). Alfred Hitchcock, of course, would embrace the theme as his own, while Lang's darkest treatment of the premise was seen in his most haunting Hollywood film, *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* (1944).

With pleasing economy, Lang foreshadows his theme as a psychology professor (Edward G. Robinson) lectures his class on matters of culpability in homicide cases. In short order, the middle-aged scholar's life is turned upside down after a chance encounter with an artist's model

(Joan Bennett) who is also the mistress of a powerful financier. When the two men clash, the professor stabs the millionaire to death with a pair of scissors. Hoping to cover up the act, he dumps the body in the woods, only to find little peace when his district attorney friend (Raymond Massey) begins sniffing for clues. Meanwhile, the model is targeted for blackmail by the dead man's bodyguard (Dan Duryea).

THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW's impact has been somewhat blunted by a long list of imitations, but Lang's approach to the material, which was quite daring and adult in its day, can still be appreciated. Even working under strict Production Code guidelines, the director conveys the alluring sordidness of Bennett's kept woman by contrasting her with the professor's prim family life and stuffy world of academia and gentlemen's clubs. The bedrock of the movie, though, is a taut, nuanced script by Nunnally Johnson, which keeps the viewer riveted as Robinson faces the inevitable fate of the doomed film noir hero.

The film's "it's only a dream" ending, which seems too absurd to be anything but the result of studio meddling, was in fact contrived by Lang, who feared the film would prove to be too downbeat for audience approval. Although it's still a sticking point with some critics, it's fun to note the clues the director plants, starting with our first image of Bennett hazily reflected in a storefront window. (She's actually referred to as a "dram girl" at one point!) Lang keeps the visual motif going by continuing to shoot her reflected image in glass and mirrors. Neither is the irony of the professor and model's plan to murder the bodyguard lost on Lang, who makes his characters increasingly more sympathetic as their culpability deepens. Lang keeps the performances tense and unemotional, particularly Robinson's, whose work is a far cry from his loudmouth insurance investigator in his other noir classic of the same year, Billy Wilder's DOUBLE INDEMNITY.

—Michael Brunas

#### HE WALKED BY NIGHT (1949)

Richard Basehart plays Roy Martin, an ingenious thief who is also quite unbalanced. He shoots a policeman who catches him breaking into an electronics store and takes off through the storm drain system beneath Los Angeles. Later, he tries to sell some stolen electronics gear, but evades capture again; his skills at intercepting police radio calls and changing his appearance keep him one step ahead of the cops. He's finally brought to ground in a lengthy chase through the storm sewers, but not before baiting the police and slipping through their dragnet several times.

Basehart excels in his screen debut as the utterly alienated Roy; he lives alone with no friends except for a little dog, digs a police bullet out of his own body with no anesthetic, and prowls the L.A. streets alone at night. His bland persona hide a brilliant sociopathic personality, while enabling him to fade easily into any crowd. HE WALKED BY NIGHT's terse dialogue and police-procedural style are perfectly tailored for Jack Webb's matter-of-fact characterization; indeed, it seems like a blueprint for the DRAGNET radio and TV series. Despite shortcomings in the areas of character development and story, this movie's strong suit is in its overall look. John Alton provided very dramatic camera work and lighting, especially considering the low budget and tight shooting schedule. Alton and Anthony Mann would later strike up a profitable partnership in the minor noir classics T-MEN and RAILROADED.

—Jerry Renshaw

#### THE SHANGHAI COBRA (1945)

Charlie Chan goes *noir!* Sure, the script is the standard lovably screwy George Callahan nonsense for which the Sidney Toler Monogram Chans are so rightly famous, but the direction by a newcomer named Phil Karlson is something else again and he makes his mark felt from the very onset. On the one hand, the film opens in a typical Monogram manner—that meandering, somewhat depressing music on the soundtrack and a fairly blatant setup. Indeed, the opening is very like that of its immediate predecessor, THE SCARLET CLUE (1945), except that Karlson places the action with a more modern mood-setting device. Rather than the standard fog-bound quasi-horror film approach (the better to hide those skimpy sets), we find ourselves looking down on a glistening, rain-drenched street. The look and the feel are pure *noir*. Karlson seems to have taken an approach that never occurred to previous series director Phil Rosen—rather than disguise the threadbare budget, he revels in its seediness, giving THE SHANGHAI COBRA an unusual grimness of the quality usually associated with Edgar G. Ulmer.

Beyond the more realistically grim mood, Karlson sets his film apart from the run of the Chans in another way—he manages the almost unthinkable by keeping things interesting when the series regulars aren't onscreen! The casting is a help, since romantic lead James Cardwell is hardly your typical leading man, nor for that matter is his character—a somewhat sleazy, down-and-out private detective—in the usual unblemished mode. Not only has he taken the job of shadowing leading lady Joan Barclay without ever having seen the man who hired him ("Good detective never accept job from man he neither see nor know," opines Charlie), but he has become most unprofessionally fixated on the object of his investigation!

Of course, the thrust of the proceedings must pay tribute to the conventions of the Chan series. Karlson is up to the job, handling the usual story

elements with utter professionalism and an evidenced familiarity with and fondness for those requirements and the preposterous world of Monogram, with its multiple coincidences and secret passageways. (In this case, they involve sewers, prompting Mantan Moreland's priceless observation, "Sewer? Why this detective business ain't sanitary!") What is perhaps most remarkable is his ability to keep a straight cinematic face in light of one of Callahan's most bizarre murder devices—a jukebox (complete with a hidden TV camera to observe customers) that injects cobra venom into the victims via the coin-return button! On its own, this is an accomplishment almost as noteworthy as the splendid atmosphere with which he imbued this unusual series entry.

—Ken Hanke

#### MURDER MY SWEET (1944)

This film *noir* marked one of the more remarkable career turnarounds of forties Hollywood. Dick Powell was weary of being cast as a rather sappy Irish-tenor romantic lead in Busby Berkeley musicals, and fought to be reinvented as a tough guy. The studios, however, balked at the idea; MURDER, MY SWEET was originally going to be released as FAREWELL, MY LOVELY (the title of the Raymond Chandler novel from which it was drawn), but studio bosses feared that audiences would think it to be a musical (especially with Powell as leading man), at a time when musicals were not faring well at the box office. Powell prevailed,



My Favorite Brunette (1947)



ABOVE: Burt Lancaster made a riveting film debut opposite Ava Gardner in Robert Siodmak's *THE KILLERS* (1946). BELOW RIGHT: Glenn Ford and Rita Hayworth in *GILDA* (1946)

however, and did quite nicely in the Philip Marlowe role. (Chandler himself said that Powell was his favorite screen embodiment of the Marlowe character.)

Marlowe tries to track down goon Moose (Mazurki) Malloy's girlfriend, and gets snarled in a tangle of stolen jewels, drugs, false identities, and decadent goings-on among the idle rich. Powell's continuously world-weary, hangdog portrayal of Marlowe is a perfect blend of hard-boiled stances and vulnerability; when he finally gets forceful with people, it's almost more like a temper tantrum than intimidation. The film helped establish some thematic devices for movies to follow; the story is recounted entirely in flashback form, with Powell's voiceover supplying some trademark Chandler lines ("I gave her a drink. She was a gal who would take a drink if she had to knock you over to get it") as he encounters grotesque characters in the decadent atmosphere of the rich and bored.

—Jerry Renshaw

#### PHANTOM LADY (1944)

Nifty little Universal programmer from Robert Siodmak with plenty of *noir* atmosphere, especially in its first half, *PHANTOM LADY* suffers mostly from shifting gears at the halfway mark and turning from a whodunit into a will-they-catch-him-in-time that, unfortunately, comes off more like a how-can-they-miss-who-the-killer-is! The problem is that not only is the viewer pretty sure who the killer must be from the fact that about 40 minutes have passed before top-billed Franchot Tone even makes an appearance, but once Tone is on the scene (and the audience is let in on his guilt), he proceeds to give such an outrageous imitation of a psycho that the cast seems to have checked their brains at the studio gate when they don't notice. He spends nearly every moment either twitching or succumbing to mysterious headaches and blacking out (especially if the topic of paranoiacs comes up) or going off on those megalomaniac rants of which movie psychos are so fond. That he conveniently reserves his more blatant twitching for moments when the others' backs are turned is no excuse! When the evidence finally penetrates even Ella Raines' skull and she accuses him of the murders, "You can't help yourself! You're mad! Mad!" the viewer is apt murmur, "Well, yeah."

This not incon siderable drawback to one side, *PHANTOM LADY* remains a thoroughly enjoyable *noir* with at

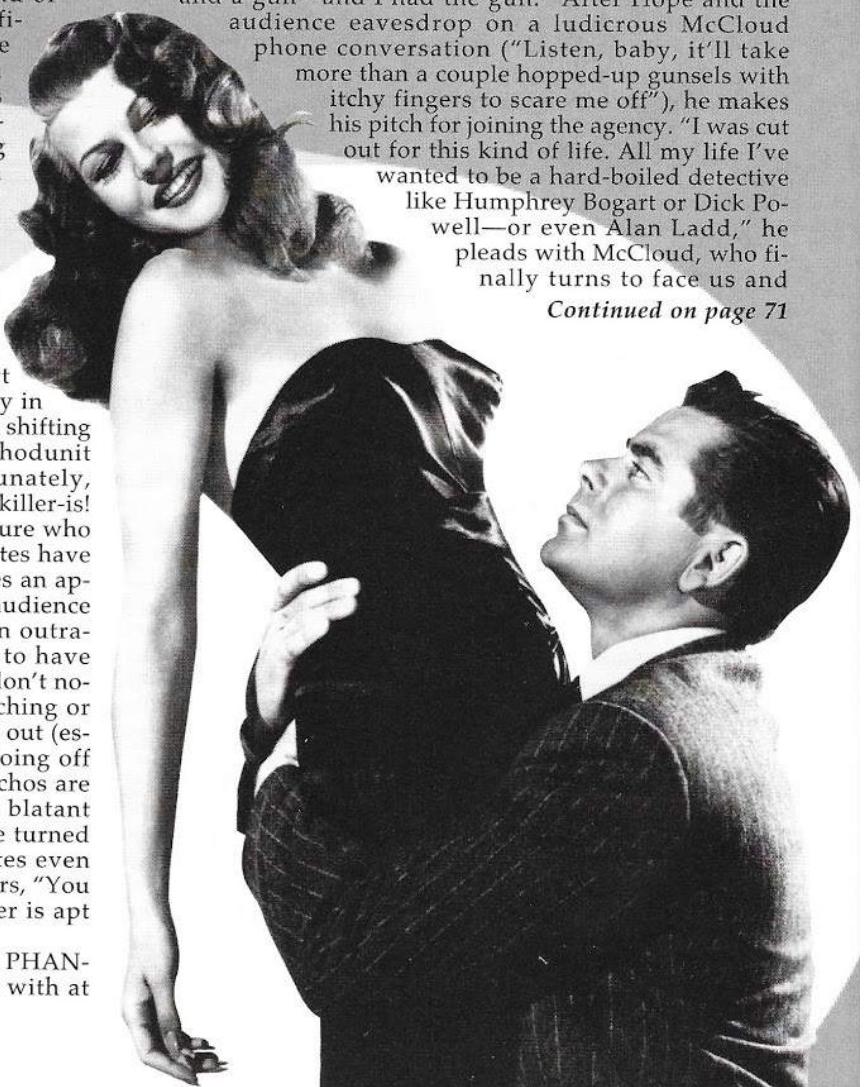
least one utterly classic sequence. When, trying to track down the elusive title character who can clear her boss (Alan Curtis) of murder, Raines adopts the disguise of a gum-chewing floozie and encounters—and with amazing distaste romances—ultra-sleazy jazz drummer Elisha Cook Jr., *PHANTOM LADY* conjures up a genuinely defining moment of the genre. Rarely has such a nightmarish and uncomfortable sequence been attempted—much less successfully so. There is a kind of grim unwholesomeness about it that creeps into your very bones in its depiction of an utterly hopeless world where it is impossible to believe the sun will ever shine again. For this sequence, if nothing else, *PHANTOM LADY* will always be assured a place in the history of *film noir*.

—Ken Hanke

#### MY FAVORITE BRUNETTE (1947)

Bob Hope's classic take on *film noir* casts him as would-be gumshoe Ronnie Jackson (in reality a photographer specializing in baby pictures) and allows him to pull off a devastating parody of the hard-boiled detective, neatly puncturing every tried-and-true aspect of the genre before the corpse is even cold. His entry into the world of detecting is itself an in-joke. In finest *noir* fashion, he tells his story while awaiting execution on death row in San Quentin. ("Gas," he complains, taking a peek at the death chamber. "Haven't even put in electricity.") Hope indulges in typically Marlovian narration style, while continually undercutting it with every thrust—"knew it was Sam McCloud coming back to his office after a busy day pinning the goods on a few assorted crooks and murderers. Sam McCloud, the coolest, toughest private eye in the business. You see, I wanted to be a detective, too. It only took brains, courage, and a gun—and I had the gun." After Hope and the audience eavesdrop on a ludicrous McCloud phone conversation ("Listen, baby, it'll take more than a couple hopped-up gunsels with itchy fingers to scare me off"), he makes his pitch for joining the agency. "I was cut out for this kind of life. All my life I've wanted to be a hard-boiled detective like Humphrey Bogart or Dick Powell—or even Alan Ladd," he pleads with McCloud, who finally turns to face us and

*Continued on page 71*



# Book Ends

## The Scarlet Street Review of Books

### THE ANNOTATED H.P.LOVECRAFT

Edited by S.T. Joshi

Dell 1997

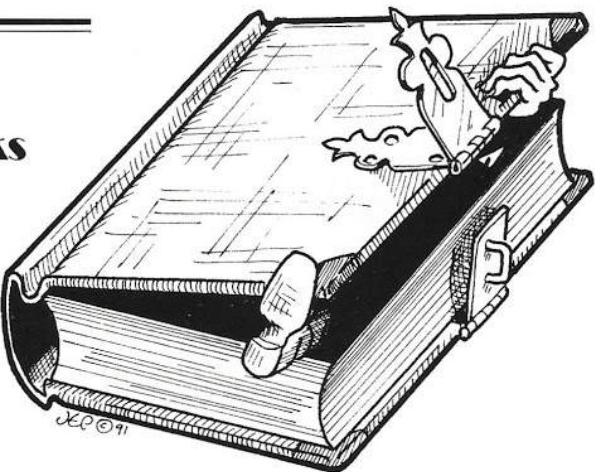
360 pages—\$12.95

No, this is not just another gimmick, one more excuse to repackage the same old H.P. Lovecraft and foist him on a jaded reading public. One might first be tempted to think so, but even a glance at this marvelous edition of four of Lovecraft's stories (1923's "The Rats in the Walls," 1927's "The Colour Out of Space," 1928's "The Dunwich Horror," and the short 1931 novel *At the Mountains of Madness*) is sufficient to banish such skepticism. Though a novice to the work of HPL could find no better place to strike up an acquaintance with the Old Gent, even longtime Lovecraft fanaddicts simply must avail themselves of this new version of their scripture. Think of it as buying, let's say, *The Oxford Annotated Reference Bible* even though you're already conversant with the basic text, having stolen it from a motel room night table. In fact, I think this comparison may even be more apt than comparing it to volumes such as *The Annotated Dracula* (1975) and *The Annotated Alice in Wonderland* (1960), though obviously *The Annotated Lovecraft* follows in their footsteps.

But what is the reason for annotations to a familiar work? Not to make an unintelligible text intelligible. If that is what's needed, the book probably will not have made it this far. Nobody's going to be interested in a second edition, since they

probably trashed their copy of the first. A work of fiction is like a joke: if you have to explain it, it's not worth explaining! But that is not the point here. Like a Bible commentary, annotations help close the "cultural literacy" gap that has opened up between the author and his latter-day readers. In all literary works, the author draws a line called a "threshold of perception." Details presupposed for the fictive world which fall beneath that line are taken for granted by the author, who assumes the readers take them for granted, too. The original readers probably did. But time has gone by, and the recent past seems like Pompeii to us, so we need excavation, explanation. S.T. Joshi provides it, closing the gap between Lovecraft's era and ours. It seems safe to say that if you have ever found yourself puzzled over this or that detail of one of these Lovecraft stories ("What the heck's a gambrel roof, anyway?"), your confusion will be dispelled. Place names, background information about the inspiration for a story, personal names, dinosaur species, historical and literary allusions, influences from earlier writers—you'll find them all here. Even dense Lovecraftian vocabulary (When's the last time you ran into "nefarious" in the *Reader's Digest* word power quiz?) is elucidated here. If some of Lovecraft's

Dean Stockwell performs a Lovecraftian ritual over Sandra Dee in American International's THE DUNWICH HORROR (1970).



Antarctic descriptions piggy-back on the paintings of Theosophist explorer Nicholas Roerich, and you've never seen those paintings, you're out of luck, aren't you? Well, not anymore! These and other illustrations will bale you out.

Editor Joshi's introduction will tell you at least what you need to know about Lovecraft and what made him pen these stories, as well as what he intended to communicate by them. Joshi is the leading Lovecraft scholar in the world today, and this is no hyperbole. You're practically hearing from HPL himself! Joshi is a student of Lovecraft the man as well as his fiction, and it is thus not surprising that he presents these stories as exhibits illustrating Lovecraft's life and genius. He provides photos of Lovecraft's various residences, something quite important given the vital sense of place and cultural background in HPL's tales. His explanations (not defenses) of Lovecraft's racist remarks and views help ameliorate what rightly offends us in a more enlightened era. He includes an essay by Lovecraft on the writing of weird fiction, to show you what Lovecraft was trying to accomplish, not just what he did accomplish. There is even an appendix on media adaptations of Lovecraft, mainly the movies based on his work, whether directly or indirectly, with or without acknowledgment. Indeed, if you are familiar with Boris Karloff's movie DIE, MONSTER, DIE! (1965), you may be surprised to read the tale it was based on, "The Colour out of Space." THE CURSE (1987) was a later attempt to render the same story. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (itself heavily indebted to Poe's 1838 *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, Lord Dunsany's 1910 "The Hashish Man," and John Taine's 1929 *The Greatest Adventure*) was apparently a major influence on John Campbell's *Who Goes There?* (1938) and on John Carpenter's adaptation THE THING (1982). "The Dunwich Horror" has appeared as a radio drama (the old SUSPENSE show), a film starring Dean Stockwell as Wilbur Whateley, and various spoken-word records and tapes. No one has yet tried to film "The Rats in the Walls," but that tale is based on Poe's



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# Seems Like Old Crimes

## by Jeff Siegel

**I**magine the shock and surprise when readers of *The New York Times* opened their papers on that Sunday in 1971 and saw that the lead essay was about a mystery writer, and a hard-boiled one at that. Even more shocking was that the article's author, the esteemed Eudora Welty, had nice things to say—more than nice, in fact. Ross Macdonald's work, she said, "was a stunning achievement." His writing "was like a stand of clean, cool, well-branched, well-tended trees in which bright birds can flash and perch. And not for show, but to sing."

Hard to believe, isn't it? Today, Macdonald's reputation is a distant memory, and his work has been forgotten even by those of us who should know better. In a post-modern world of Spenders and Kinsey Milhones, Macdonald's books often seem as quaint as the coat and tie that Archer almost always wears.

Perhaps, with the release of new Vintage Crime editions of his best novels, Macdonald will get another look. People will realize that praise like Welty's was deserved, and that Macdonald came closer than anyone ever has—or probably ever will—of transcending the limits of the hard-boiled detective novel and turning it into something better than it has any right to be. The post-modern world—from Dave Robicheaux to Matt Scudder—owes Macdonald and Archer a debt they may never be able to repay.

At his most ordinary, Lew Archer was worthy of being mentioned with Sam

Spade and Philip Marlowe in the hard-boiled Holy Trinity. At his best, in such books as *The Zebra-Striped Hearse* (1962), *The Far Side of the Dollar* (1965), and *The Underground Man* (1971), Archer was an original, a character who offered a mirror on the American psyche between World War II and Vietnam. Everything was there for us to see, if we weren't afraid to look. But fear bubbles beneath the surface of these novels, just as it does in life—fear of failure in business, fear of failure in love, fear of failure in family. So we were afraid to look, and then suffered the consequences of that failure.

You can't begin to understand Macdonald and Archer without first understanding the relationship between Archer and the anti-Archer, Mike Hammer. The Mickey Spillane novels, which seem to sum up the neuroses of the McCarthy era, were written almost in parallel with the Archer books. The first Archer, *The Moving Target*, was published in 1949; the first Hammer, *I, the Jury*, in 1947. Over the next decade, each detective tried to solve his culture's problems in exactly opposite ways.

In this respect, Hammer made Archer possible. Someone had to offer an alternative to Spillane's vision of an America of sex and Old Testament-style sadism, and the duty fell to Macdonald. Spillane's books are cultural history; Macdonald's are cultural future, offering a glimpse of what is in store for us as our cities and families and our rela-

tionships collapse around us—and without any help from the Commies, pinkos, and liberals who plague Spillane's world. We will do it, says Macdonald, all by ourselves.

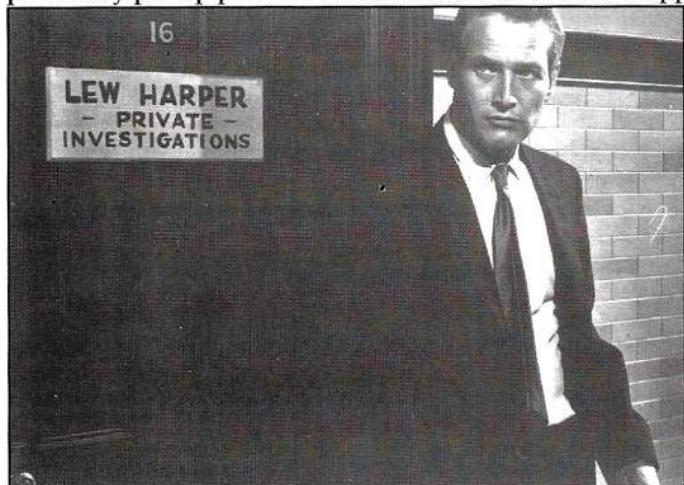
Hammer is as violent and vicious as Archer is subtle and subdued. If Archer works to heal the tears in society's fabric, Hammer yearns to buzzsaw the entire garment. He is an anarchist in the finest tradition of the political revolutionaries who kept blowing themselves up 100 years ago in their attempt to perfect the world in their image. Hammer not only believes that eggs must be broken to make omelettes; he also believes the chicken must have its neck wrung and the farmer should be shot for good measure.

Contrast that with Archer's approach. He shoots no one, sleeps with no one, chases no one, and fights with no one (especially in the last half-dozen or so books). He does a lot of talking and he does a lot of traveling, often cross-country, and his assistant is not a secretary or a friendly policeman, but his car. He shuttles back and forth between the characters in the story like a man negotiating a peace treaty. Archer's goal is not just to solve the crime, or to serve as God's messenger on earth (an overlooked aspect of Hammer's personality), but to bring some sort of peace to the people whose lives have been shattered.

"The money wouldn't do her any permanent good," Archer says in *The Drowning Pool* (1950). "She'd buy a mink coat or a fast car, and find a man to steal one or wreck the other . . . Still, it would give her something to remember different from the memories that she had. She had no souvenirs and I had too many. I wanted no mementos . . ."

That is a theme that lingers throughout the entire series, not unlike a femme fatale's perfume long after she has left the room. It is one of the ways that Archer is different from, and goes beyond, the hero in the traditional hard-boiled novel as practiced by Hammett and Chandler. Spade is the consummate

**LEFT:** Before Lew Archer became so famous that a name change would have been unthinkable, he was Lew HARPER (1966), the better to accommodate Paul Newman's penchant for playing such "H" named characters as Hud and Hombre. (He was in the film, but did not play the lead in THE HELEN MORGAN STORY.) **RIGHT:** Shelley Winters' pleasantly plump persona was in full bloom when she appeared in HARPER.



professional who will turn over the woman he loves because it's his job. Marlowe is the knight errant who will rescue the damsel in distress, but continue his quest no matter what his feelings for the damsel. Archer, on the other hand, wants his clients to feel better, to be happier.

He cares about them as people, as alien a notion to Spade and Marlowe as Chandler's tarantula on angel food cake. In *The Far Side of the Dollar* (1964), one reason Archer stays on the case is that he likes his erstwhile client, even though the client has lied to him, fired him, and thwarted him at every opportunity. Spade, on the other hand, doesn't even like his partner. And when Marlowe tries to make friends with a client, as in *The Long Goodbye* (1953), he winds up being used in a scam.

It is this attitude that gives Archer the aura of a psychotherapist, the gumshoe shrink. Macdonald, who underwent therapy himself, doesn't help matters by sometimes referring to the gestalt of a case, as if all Archer had to do was to put the principles together in a room and the murderer would appear via the wonders of group therapy. There are, in fact, any number of critics who are convinced that the key to the Macdonald books lies down this road, and it's difficult to argue with them.

After all, this is a writer who had some identity problems of his own. He couldn't write under his real name, Kenneth Millar, because his wife was the mystery novelist Margaret Millar. He couldn't write under his first pen name, John Macdonald or his second, John Ross Macdonald, because they were too close to that of Travis McGee creator John D. MacDonald. Hence Ross Macdonald.

And the Archer novels, especially those beginning with *The Galton Case* (1959), are more case histories than the histories of cases, as one critic pointed out. Macdonald himself wrote that when he worked on *The Galton Case*, "seismic disturbances occurred in my life. My half-suppressed Canadian years, my whole childhood and youth, rose like a corpse from the bottom of the sea to confront me . . . I went through belated mental growing pains, trying to understand the peculiar shape of my life."

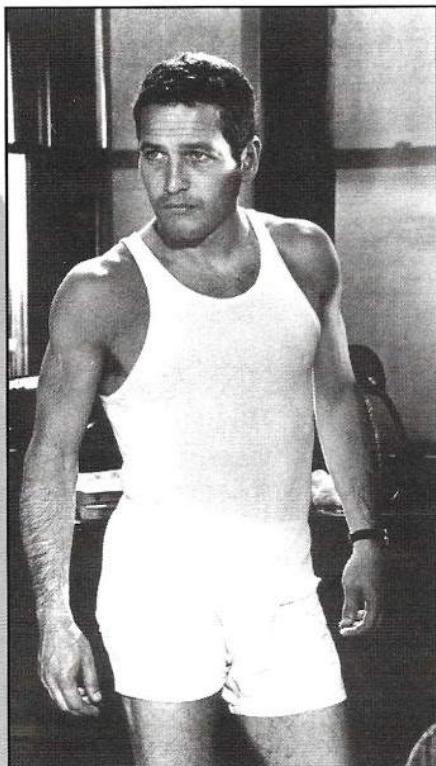
Those images of family and nature—always present in every Archer book—tend to dominate the action in the eight novels after *The Galton Case*. Archer is confronted with not only a dysfunctional family, but dysfunctional nature as well. In *The Underground Man*, which so impressed Welty, a forest fire ravages the hills around Los Angeles, and everyone worries that mud slides will be next. Against this background, Archer looks for a missing boy who may or may not have been kidnapped by his father, who is in turn looking for his father, who had vanished 30 years before.

In *The Far Side of the Dollar*, as an unseasonable August rain falls on southern California, Archer must find a wayward son who may or may not have run away from home and who may or

may not have orchestrated his own kidnapping. In this, the book is not just about family, but about all families and what has happened to them in the past half-century.

"I was getting the impression," says Archer after meeting the boy's parents, "that Tom was the center of the household, but a fairly unknown center, like a god they made sacrifices to and expected benefits from, and maybe punishments, too. I was beginning to sympathize with Tom."

Finally, no one likes to talk to Archer, not even to lie to him. Every private eye is used to having the client make things up. What they're not used to is being told that the facts of the case are none of



Paul Newman as Lew Harper

their business, a situation that Archer finds himself in repeatedly. How much different is that from the psychiatrist who must peel the layers away from a patient, often without the patient's help?

Yet Archer is not a psychotherapist, and he can never be one. He cares too much. A good therapist is objective, and Archer makes no pretense of objectivity. After all, he sympathizes with the missing child. A client is not a patient, and in this Archer is no different from Spade or Marlowe. It is the link in the chain that holds them together, that ensures that no matter how far afield Archer wanders, no matter how many ailing families he tries to put back together, he will remain firmly in the hard-boiled tradition.

This is part of Macdonald's legacy, and it is all around us—no matter how much we have ignored him since his death in 1983. Robert Parker, the author of the Spenser novels, wrote his doc-

toral dissertation on Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald. Sue Grafton's Kinsey Milhone lives in Santa Teresa, says Grafton, because Archer spent so much time there. Almost every post-modern private eye took something from Macdonald, whether it is child psychologist Alex Delaware or Dave Robicheaux, whose preoccupation with family is almost as obsessive as his drinking once was.

Few hard-boiled writers, Chandler included, earned as much critical and popular acclaim as Macdonald did. His novels starting with *The Underground Man* regularly made the best-seller list, and his numbers are Stephen King-like, with dozens of printings in hardcover and paperback. Yet Macdonald has faded from our consciousness in a way that Chandler and Hammett haven't.

Some of this is natural. Macdonald has been dead for more than a decade. Given the "out of sight, out of mind" way the publishing business works today, that means he never existed at all. More important, though, Macdonald doesn't seem relevant. In a world in which children shoot up schools and parents murder their children, a fellow who tries to put the pieces back together by talking to everyone appears like a silly old man. We don't need talk—we need action. We need to blow the bad guys away, with a death more horrible each time. Mickey Spillane's books are not an anachronism today because they are violent. They are an anachronism because they are not violent enough.

This, of course, misses what Archer is all about. Violence is ultimately self-defeating, no matter how much we try to kid ourselves otherwise. Macdonald knew this, and it is one of the foundations of his work. Archer gets beat up in *The Galton Case*, and there is nothing glamorous or poetic or manly about it. He has to have his jaw wired and he can't eat solid food.

That's an honesty missing from too much hard-boiled fiction today, and it comes closest to explaining why Macdonald has fallen from favor. One critic has written that the genre, which was once the most realistic and closest to life, has become the most artificial and the most removed from life. Macdonald is not artificial. His work is all too real, and his characters are such a part of life that it is sometimes painful to watch them deceive themselves. *Black Money* (1966) ends with a suicide, yet the woman who loved the man who died has learned little from his death. Just because something is true doesn't mean we want to hear it.

"She was lying on the sitting room floor face to face with Tappinger," says Archer, "their profiles interlocking like complementary shapes cut from a single piece of metal. She lay there with him, silent and unmoving, until the noise of sirens was heard along the road. Then she got up and washed her face and combed herself."

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## SPELLBOUND IN SAN FRANCISCO

Continued from page 30

more.' Burke kisses her and says, 'I like you, Mary Ann.' And she says, 'Ingrid.' Of course, the joke is that she's on the verge of becoming Ingrid Bergman, because she's just fallen in love with an amnesiac."

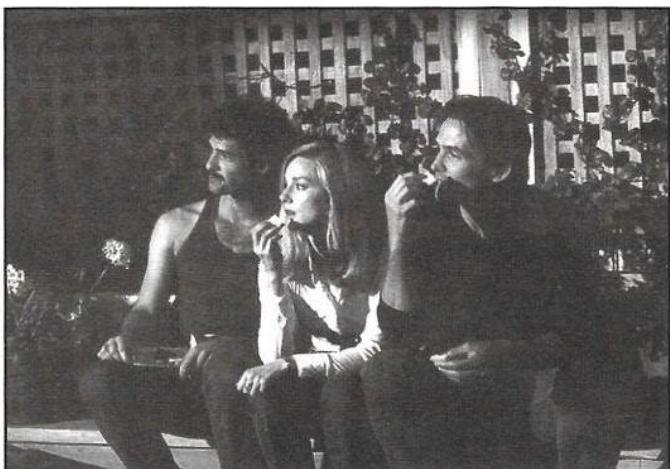
Though the truth concealed by Burke's memory loss doesn't mirror that of the Peck character in SPELLBOUND, the miniseries doesn't lack for dark clues to its own mystery, including a grim "hair transplant man," Burke's extreme fear of heights, and his colorful reaction to red roses. (He vomits at the sight of them.)

Yet another frequent Hitchcock concern—motherhood—figures prominently in MORE TALES OF THE CITY, just as it does in NOTORIOUS (1946), TO CATCH A THIEF (1955), PSYCHO (1960), THE BIRDS (1963), and MARNIE (1964).

"There are eight mothers in MORE TALES OF THE CITY," claimed Maupin, "maybe more. I think this must have had to do with the fact that I was coming out at the time I was writing the series. I was extremely concerned about what my mother would think. The letter Michael writes to his mother in MORE TALES is the way my parents found out. They were reading the serial and when they got to that part they realized I was speaking from my own heart. That's the way I did it. And actually, I got the same response that Michael gets. My mother wrote to say that it was killing my father and my father wrote to say that it was killing my mother. But they both dealt with it beautifully—eventually."

It is in MORE TALES that Frannie Halcyon, widowed and fast approaching the big six-oh, spends several days at a retreat called Pinus. There she is catered to (in almost every way imaginable) by a staff of hunky young men, a wish come true that was once the dream of Frannie's creator.

"I'm rather proud of that sequence," admitted Maupin. "It completely predicated Chippendales. There was absolutely nothing like that at the time I invented it. As a matter of fact, it began as a gay fantasy. I was lying around the pool at Rock Hudson's house at Palm Springs with some friends, and we were joking about what an idyllic life it was



Michael, Mary Ann, and Jon (Paul Hopkins, Laura Linney, and Bill Campbell) savor some pound cake from home in MORE TALES OF THE CITY.

and how we could continue to live like this. And somebody said, 'Well, when we're old cusses we'll just hire beautiful Colt models to hang around and take care of us.' I thought that was such a good idea that I decided to put it in *More Tales of the City*, but I was generous about it and shared it with a heterosexual character. It consequently made it more interesting, I think.

"Actually, we delayed shooting on one Pinus scene, the one with the naked guy jumping out of the cake for Frannie's birthday. It was discovered that this godlike man had a small pimple on his godlike butt. The makeup lady had to touch it up before we could proceed with shooting. That was the night in which I really thought I must be living the dream: sitting there in the midst of these old ladies in their pale blue caftans, with a naked guy getting his butt painted. I thought, 'I made all this shit up and here he is!' I was listening to two women in the front row, literally craning their necks as they gazed up at this Chippendale

Continued on page 73

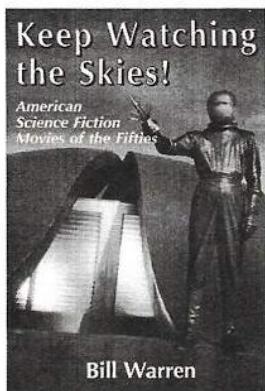
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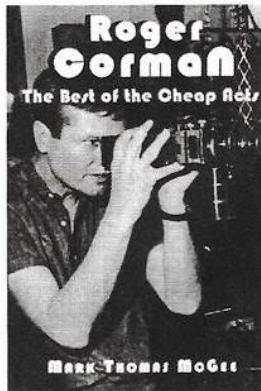


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## LAWRENCE TIERNEY

*Continued from page 38*

something in her that she had not dealt with in nearly half a century. In spite of the bad times, it was clear that she felt very deeply for Larry . . . .

**SS:** Well, you changed her life. It sounded like you were the reason she didn't marry Franchot Tone.

**LT:** She was all right. (Spying a store on La Cienega) Mattresses! Beautiful! Let's go buy a couple of mattresses. Give 'em to people for their birthday. There's a Nordstrom's. Barnes and Noble. Did you ever see *BORN TO KILL*?

**SS:** Yes, of course! That's the movie that gave me the idea to write about you.

**LT:** Good. It's a stupid film.

**SS:** You don't like it?

**LT:** Naw. I couldn't get the good guy roles 'cause I was such a bad guy. I was under contract and I heard about *DILLINGER* and on a fluke I got the part. *DILLINGER* did so well. It broke all records for a film that recouped and earned in that budget class, which was all of \$60,000 back then. It made millions all over the world. So then they thought they had a good thing at RKO and they started to put me in one bad guy part after another—*BORN TO KILL*, *SAN QUENTIN*, *DEVIL THUMBS A RIDE*, etc., etc. No imagination. In this town they know what dollars are and they know what lox are. Lox, bagels, and bucks . . . .

**SS:** Well, you shouldn't have done so well in *DILLINGER* and made them so much money. And you never told me you were a singer.

**LT:** What?

**SS:** You sang a whole number in *KILL OR BE KILLED*.

**LT:** Where did you see that? You saw that? Will you make me a copy? I'd like to see that. Beautiful, beautiful . . . .

**SS:** Your nephew Michael wants a copy of *HOODLUM*.

**LT:** Aaaaggh! I hate that film!

**SS:** Well, he's never seen it and your brother Edward is in it—Michael's dad. Don't you think he ought to see his father on film once?

**LT:** Where you want to go? I'm going to take you to dinner. (Mock homeboy accent) Where you wanna go, boy?

**SS:** I wish I could, but I'm going to a dinner party that Fay Wray is having.

**LT:** Go ahead, kid. Run that light. No one's here. So, why am I not invited to Fay Wray's party?

**SS:** Well, it's mostly her family . . . .

**LT:** I'm kidding ya! Where are we? Beverly Drive. Look at that old restaurant. The gold one. That used to be the May Company Store. Now there's a 99-cent store next to it. What do ya need?

With that the legendary tough guy closed his eyes and suddenly went to sleep. I was surprised to find myself feeling almost paternally towards him. He reminded me of an old bear that forages all year only to go into a well-earned hibernation. The hot Los Angeles sun was soaking him as he slept sound-

lessly, lulled to Dreamsville by the steady hum of the rental car. I thought of the unbelievable life that this legend has led. I couldn't quite reconcile the guy who played the seminal *film noir* bad guy, virtually redefining the part, with the old guy snoozing next to me. I thought of the years he slept in abandoned buildings. The hell he raised. The endless tabloid photos and stories. He never had the luxury of messing up his life in private. It was always fodder for the lowest of the muckrakers. I

I couldn't imagine how it would feel to have every one of your lowest crashes make the front page of scandal sheets. I thought of the people who came up to him in Venice and still called him Dillinger and asked him for autographs and pictures. He played the part for them still. It was clear how very intelligent he really is and I thought how tiring the act must be for the man whom Betsy von Furstenburg said read Shakespeare and taught her to really act. And I thought if it was hard for me to reconcile the two Lawrence Tierneys, what must it be like for him? And this was the man who had two new films coming out and who had just shot a principal role in a national Sprint commercial two days ago. Somehow it amazed me that he was still keeping on. As we got closer to his apartment, Larry woke up. I offered to drop him at the door so he didn't have to walk, but he wouldn't hear of it . . . .

**LT:** Do me a favor, just back up quick and get that space! Someone's gonna take it. Just do what I say. Christ!

I helped Larry into the apartment and got him settled at his desk/throne/dining-room table. Soon, with his remote control and his phone, he was ready to hold court for whomever stopped by that night.

**LT:** So, good luck to you, kid. Let's make a movie. Take care of yourself. Call me tomorrow. I'll see you later. You need a ride to the airport? Did you give me your number in New York? Write it down again somewhere. (Grabs a book) Did you read this? Here, it's a good book. I read it. Heavy stuff, take it. See ya, kid.

And I was on my way. A few days later, as I settled in on the plane back to Manhattan, I took out the book he had given me. It was something to do with deserts and God. I had to hand it to the tough guy; he was full of surprises. Just as I was ready to give it a try and delve into Zen Buddhism at 2,000 feet, I noticed something. The first page had a meaningful quote about primitive faith and the symbolism of the Thunderbird in



Lawrence Tierney holds court in Quentin Tarantino's *RESERVOIR DOGS* (1992)

ancient religions. Underneath, in Larry's distinctive scrawl, he had written:

Old Sanskrit Recipe for a Thunderbird: Feed Heinz beans to a cockatoo!

And I thought he was only learning state capitals in all those jail cells. The tough guy had had the last laugh again.

Rick McKay is a NYC writer and filmmaker who was recently named "Outstanding Journalist of 1997" in San Francisco and also recently won the national Telly Award for his work producing for the PBS series *CITY ARTS*. He loves hearing from Scarlet Streeters via e-mail at rckmck@aol.com or at his website: <http://members.aol.com/rickmckay/>

## MICHAEL TIERNEY

*Continued from page 39*

neighbor, gives him a suit and tries to help him get a job. Tries to get him to quit smoking. It's basically a side of Hollywood that I grew up in. Not young actors and actresses, but real central Hollywood, the dregs of Hollywood, where all the scum is. Hollywood and Highland. The film is tongue and cheek, and black comedy.

**SS:** You grew up related to two famous actors who became notorious drunks. Any correlation in your film? Or in your life?

**MT:** It definitely runs in the family. I would consider myself an alcoholic, but I still drink. I am taming the dragon. I can't stand AA. I'm not a Christian and I don't like saying the Lord's Prayer. Counting off days of sobriety is like being in prison. I still get crazy. I broke my wrist earlier this year when me and my friends were drinking and I threw the band off stage. I've made mistakes and paid for it, but I don't want to be an extremist. I don't really resolve it in the film. Life doesn't always work that way.

**SS:** How did you get into the business?

**MT:** I started in music, composing and playing, but when Larry came out here he was introducing me around, saying, "Michael wants to be an actor." I was saying, "No, I don't." I've done a lot of

different jobs over the years, but found my way to filmmaking. I've run my own businesses, worked in demolition, drove trucks for many years. Now I manage Larry and I have investors in my film, so I have a little budget there. I live meagerly and am finishing the film.

**SS:** What's your favorite Larry Tierney movie?

**MT:** RESERVOIR DOGS. It is Quentin's best movie and the others are a little dated. They're good for what they are, but a little old for me.

**SS:** Larry starred in quite a few horror films in the eighties. He even worked for George Romero in MIDNIGHT. Are you going to make any horror films yourself?

**MT:** I don't know, but I do know that I don't find movies that scary these days. One of my big beefs these days is the sound. It's all digital and there is no emotion in the sound. That's why people don't get scared anymore in the theaters, in my opinion. It's all purely intellectual and there's no emotion in it. The sound is what brings the person into the movie. Digital is just digits, just numbers, it is not carrying sound vibrations into the theater. People know, on an emotional level, that it's fake. Sound has been destroyed by the technicians. It used to be done by craftsman, now it's done by "mouse-clickers."

**SS:** Anything else?

**MT:** Yeah, check out our web site for the new film. We had a great time shooting it. It will be done by May '98 and hit the festivals soon after. People think because I grew up as Lawrence Tierney and Scott Brady's nephew that I lived this movie-star life. I wasn't living the life people think. I grew up around all these other kinds of freaks—not movie people, and Larry was one of them. That's real life.

## ROBERT WISE

Continued from page 47

very long. Then the big set was by Harry Horner, a fine production designer who did the sets and the interior of the apartment and all, which was marvelous. We never had a decent schedule on it. I supposed I shot maybe 40 or 45 days, something like that.

**SS:** The film that most people think had a runaway budget was STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE.

**RW:** (Laughs) Was it ever! Terrible, terrible . . .

**SS:** What are your memories of making that film?

**RW:** Not very good ones.

**SS:** Really?

**RW:** Well, not to do with the people. The shooting, working with the actors, with Bill Shatner and Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley and all—that was all fine. The problem was that we had to start shooting before we had the script in shape. We had only the first act right and we were rewriting the script all the way to the last day of shooting, and that's a very unsatisfactory way to work. Very unsatisfac-

tory. In addition to that, we had problems with the special effects team. They had found a company to do it before I came on the picture and they had never done a big feature like this before. They had mainly done commercials. It became apparent after working with them for several months that they were not up to the job. They were certainly not going to be able to get the work done in time for the planned release date. I said, "Look, these guys—if we had another year to finish it up we could do it, but they're not going to make that release date next Christmas." So we had to let them go. Fortunately, we were able to get Doug Trumbull, who was free at the time, and John Baxter, who was another good special effects man, to come on and do the work jointly. They split it up because we were so far behind schedule that we had to work their whole outfits day and night, seven days a week, practically for months. That just ran the budget to hell!

**SS:** Supposedly Jerry Goldsmith had to write music for scenes he hadn't even seen yet!

**RW:** Oh, I don't know about that, really. That's pretty unusual. (Laughs) When Jerry first saw the film, he probably saw it without the effects shots.

**SS:** Was it difficult going into established territory like STAR TREK?

**RW:** I don't know; I didn't find it so. I hadn't been a Trekkie, so I had to find out what it was all about when they called me about doing it. I just felt it was a challenge. I looked at the TV shows. Some of them I felt were pretty good and some all right, but I felt that the miniatures they had looked tinny and lousy.

**SS:** Let's finish by mentioning your musicals. WEST SIDE STORY is one of the great films. It was quite daring to make a musical on the streets of New York.

**RW:** Well, that was one of the big challenges we had. I was the one who insisted that we had to open in New York. I said there was no way we could do this thing successfully without starting it on a real location in New York City. We did all the daytime stuff in New York. Since all the rest of the film was done in sunset or at night, we could do that on sets. Jerry Robbins who was not only the choreographer but my codirector, said, "Bob, I agree with you very much. Boy, you've given me the biggest challenge in the world, to take my most stylized dancing in the prologue and put it in the most realistic background we'll have." So that's one of the reasons I came up with that opening, that helicopter opening. I knew I had to show New York to start with; I didn't want to do that same old cross the river, the bridge, and the skyline bit. I suddenly got the idea: "I wonder what it would look like straight down from the helicopter?" I was looking for a way I could show a real New York—as real as possible—but a New York that practically no people had ever seen, even New Yorkers. I was hoping to show sort of an abstract New York that would help make the audiences accept the kids dancing in a real street.

**SS:** You also used also a helicopter for THE



SOUND OF MUSIC, again for the opening shot.

**RW:** I didn't shoot it.

**SS:** You didn't shoot the helicopter shot?

**RW:** No, no—that kind of thing you get the other people to do. (Laughs) The same with the helicopter shots of New York—all the New York stuff was shot by an associate of mine who was a sketch artist. He just shot the hell out of New York! We had about 30 minutes worth of film, which we cut down.

**SS:** So the next time we watch a Robert Wise film and there's a helicopter shot, we'll know it wasn't you.

**RW:** That's right! (Laughs) Let's give credit where credit is due.

**SS:** Well, you deserve credit for directing some fine films in a variety of genres—film noir, sci-fi, horror, and musicals.

**RW:** And I did it with both feet on the ground.

## RECORD RACK

Continued from page 52

of an epoch that, as the affluent fifties melded into an enigmatic sixties that paradoxically marked both the rebirth of and the End Title for American innocence, culminated in the final days of that secure, hedonistically romantic mindset that Mancini and his cohorts so sleekly evoked (and for which we seem so self-consciously nostalgic today). After the final lyrical effusions of Mancini's "Moon River," and the last of his swinging, nonthreatening, even whimsical jazz cocktails were downed, the face of American music and Hollywood films, and indeed the face of America itself, would change forever, fading to black in a big hangover from which it has yet to recover. And in retrospect we see that films such as DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE WILD ONE, MICKEY ONE, and so many others saw it coming all along.

P.S.: Need a respite from all this Murder, Mayhem, and Macho? May I suggest Rhinoceros' MARACAS, MARIMBAS, AND MAMBOS: LATIN CLASSICS AT MGM. While the period covered is roughly the same as MURDER IS MY BEAT, it's a whole different Good Neighbor universe here (film Technicolor) where you can put your brain on hold and revel in a

sparkling collection of 18 high-energy tracks from *BATHING BEAUTY* (1944), *HOLIDAY IN MEXICO* (1946), and *NANCY GOES TO RIO* (1950), including, oh my God, Ethel Smith's florid "Tico Tico" in real stereo!



Ross Care's overview article on the Hollywood studio music scene in the 1950s has just been published in the book *Performing Arts: Motion Pictures*, by the Library of Congress in Washington.

## AUDREY TOTTER

Continued from page 52

Westerns, but I had a very nice time. I enjoyed it immensely. I've never seen such fans! It's so exciting!

## DARK PASSAGES

Continued from page 64

proves to actually be Alan Ladd. Despite Hope's proof of his credentials for the job by virtue of owning a trenchcoat just like his hero's, he is rejected as an unsuitable partner. Unfortunately for everyone but the viewer, McCloud makes the mistake of leaving Hope more or less in charge of the office (to answer the telephone), so that following some by-play with bourbon and bullets (Hope handles neither very well—choking on the liquor he calls "smooth," and complaining that the bullets escaping his grasp are "too small"), he is mistaken by theatrically mysterious Dorothy Lamour as the real McCoy (or McCloud, as the case may be). On this premise, hangs the plot.

Boasting a fine trio of villains in Peter Lorre, Lon Chaney Jr. (doing a comic version of his Lennie from 1939's *OF MICE AND MEN*), and Charles Dingle, and kept moving at lightning speed by director Elliott Nugent, *MY FAVORITE BRUNETTE* scores on virtually all levels. The comic set-pieces come thick and fast and the finely tuned mixture of bragadocio and self-effacement in Hope's deliciously sub-Chandler narration ("The house looked like something out of *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*—you know, the kind of joint where it looks like you can hunt quail in the hallways? I didn't know it then, but I was gonna be the quail") holds the proceedings together.

*MY FAVORITE BRUNETTE* is so filled with smart lines, performances, and gags that it plays beautifully. Hope's scene with Lamour in which the villains have con-

Ella Raines meets up with that inevitable denizen of the noir world, Elisha Cook Jr., in *PHANTOM LADY* (1944).



SS: One last question: were there any film roles you regret turning down, or that you tried for and didn't get?

AT: There were roles that they tried to borrow me for that Metro simply wouldn't let me do. One was *THE KILLERS*. I didn't do it because they wanted me to start *LADY IN THE LAKE*. They wouldn't let me do the one that Shelley Winters did with Montgomery Clift [*A PLACE IN THE SUN*]. She was very good in it. It wasn't that she couldn't do the part or that I would have been any better in it, but I would have loved to have played it.

## SCREEN AND SCREEN

Continued from page 27

there aren't any supplements included, the laserdisc provides a suitable showcase for this rarely screened Hammer title.

That said, *COUNTESS DRACULA* remains a lesser company effort. It may have seemed appropriate to engage the services of a Hungarian director to helm a tale with Hungarian roots, but given the slow pace of the screenplay, the viewer is left to decide whether the result is Rhapsody, or goulash.

—John F. Black

vinced him that she is insane is as good as anything the pair ever did. ("Uh oh, her schizo's about to phrenia," worries Hope, before relieving her of a letter opener with, "You can open the mailman later.") Just as good are Hope's encounters with Chaney's quarter-wit, Willie (whom he categorizes as "Boulder dam with legs"), wherein he is outsmarted at every turn by the sheer good-natured dumb luck of his adversary. At one point, he cons Willie into bending the bars of his asylum-prison window so that he and Lamour might escape ("You're wonderful. You're solid spinach. Oh, you're great. I'll buy you a rabbit later," Hope tells him), only to have the hulking moron notice the bent bars and set them back to rights with an explanatory, "Ya' gotta be neat, you know."

As in previous Hope films, Bing Crosby makes a guest appearance, this time as a very disappointed executioner when proof of Hope's innocence arrives at the last moment. "He'll take any kind of a part," sneers Hope, finding it necessary to physically divert Lamour's gaze from the direction of the crooner!

—Ken Hanke

### DOUBLE INDEMNITY (1944)

Based on the 1943 James M. Cain story, *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* finds Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) being conned by Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) into devising a plot to knock off her husband and make off with a settlement from his insurance policy. The fire between them soon goes cold after the murder is committed and Phyllis has manipulated Neff for her own purposes. Claims investigator Keyes (Edward G. Robinson), who is also Neff's friend, smells a rat when looking into the death of Phyllis' husband; the nooses slowly tighten around the illicit lovers' necks.

Raymond Chandler worked with Billy Wilder on the screenplay, which led to plenty of problems. The somewhat prissy Chandler despised James M. Cain and considered his work little better than smut (which didn't keep him from developing some dialogue that fairly crackles with sexual innuendo), and the personality clashes between him and Wilder are the stuff of legend. Hollywood didn't agree with Chandler's nature at all; thus, the final product bears the imprimatur of Wilder more than either Chandler or Cain.

The film points up the darker-than-pitch humor and bitter cynicism that would crop up in Wilder's later films, such as *SUNSET BOULEVARD* (1950) and *THE BIG CARNIVAL* (1951). MacMurray balked at the departure from the blandly likable roles that he had played in the past, fearing that he would alienate audiences, but he's completely believable as the rather spineless Neff. An obsessive, sick romance, a black widow femme fatale, and a protagonist bound on a fatalistic one-way trip to the end of the line; that's what *noir* would become in ensuing years.

—Jerry Renshaw

### THE MALTESE FALCON (1941)

Third time was the charm for Dashiell Hammett's famous mystery novel. Roy Del Ruth had made a very good version with Ricardo Cortez as a rather too urbane Sam Spade in 1931, a take on the book that retains a certain freshness owing to the fact that it lacks any special reverence for its source material. (And that version boasts the wonderful pre-code moment in which Iva Archer spots Brigid O'Shaughnessy in Spade's apartment in her dressing gown and poses the immortal question, "Who's that dame wearin' my kimono?") William Dieterle's 1936 version, SATAN MET A LADY, is one of the greatest of all cinematic two-headed cows, but hardly a version of THE MALTESE FALCON. (This one gets so confused in its plotting that it inserts a bunch of "explanatory" news items on the history of its ersatz falcon to help clarify things. It doesn't help.)

John Huston's version, on the other hand, virtually is the book. The atmosphere (which practically defined *noir*) is dead on the mark and the film is so perfectly cast that the performers either all but disappear into their roles, or else the roles are so like their screen personalities that there seems no difference. Bogart is at once shabbier than Cortez while being a lot less the lounge lizard than his predecessor's rather obvious Lothario. Mary Astor is more realistic and less actressy than Bebe Daniels had been, while that magnificent trio of villains Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, and Elisha Cook Jr. were unbeatable, despite the fact that Dudley Digges (who originated at least one other role Greenstreet would inherit in the forties), Otto Matieson, and Dwight Frye were certainly no slouches in the original. The 1931 film is a bit more over the top in its pre-code presentation of the homosexual nature of the Digges/Frye relationship (even to a sequence in which Matieson blatantly and duplicitly hits on Frye), but only the Huston film preserves the

word "gunsel" to describe the Cook character. Presumably, in 1941 the censors thought this referred to a gunman and not a homosexual!

At bottom, what truly sets Huston's film apart is that it has a sense of the mythic about it that is quite lacking in the earlier version. The Falcon in both, of course, turns out to be bogus, but it is left to Huston's film to offer that brilliant final statement when Spade is asked, "It's heavy. What is it?" only to reply, "The stuff that dreams are made of." And that, of course, is exactly the stuff that classics—as opposed to very good films—are made of.

—Ken Hanke

### GILDA (1946)

Probably the most intriguing film ever made by Charles Vidor, whose work is often—and unfairly—associated only with his Hollywoodized and sanitized composer biopics, 1945's A SONG TO REMEMBER ("Discontinue this 'Polonaise' jumble!") and 1960's SONG WITHOUT END, GILDA is a work so brimming with a gay subtext that one marvels that it was made at all. Presumably, filmgoers at the time were so caught up in the classic introductory shot of Rita Hayworth and her "Put the Blame on Mame" number that nothing else mattered. Seen today, however, the film's gay themes seem more text than subtext. Hayworth comes across less like the object of both Glenn Ford's and George Macready's desire than she appears to be the fly in the ointment of their relationship, making the film one of most unusual of all *noir* triangles.

In probably the best performance of his career, Ford plays a down on his luck drifter and crooked gambler who

has just landed in Argentina. "To me a dollar was a dollar in any language. It was my first night in the Argentine and I didn't know much about the local citizens, but I knew about American sailors and I knew I better get out of there," narrates Ford upon winning a crap game with loaded dice. (One soon has cause to wonder just what he knows about sailors!) No sooner has he left the game than a waterfront thug tries to rob him, whereupon, in a moment of unbridled symbolism, he is saved by the timely intervention of George Macready's omnipresent phallic sword cane. This extension of Macready, which he calls his "little friend" (a soubriquet he unsubtly soon applies to Ford as well), is actually seen twice before we ever see Macready himself! The subsequent dialogue between the two is not only sexually barbed, but is the sort of banter more generally associated with a boy-meets-girl scene. "A cane like that can come in handy," opines Ford admiringly as Macready retracts its blade. "It is a most faithful, obedient friend. It is silent when I wish it to be silent. It talks when I wish to talk," explains Macready. "That's your idea of a friend?" asks Ford. "That is my idea of a friend," agrees Macready. "You must lead a gay life," Ford suggests. "I lead the life I like to lead," volunteers Macready. "You're a lucky man," enthuses Ford. "I make my own luck," Macready tells him. "What are you doing in a neighborhood like this?" asks Ford not unreasonably. "I came down here to save your life," Macready explains by way of dodging the question. Soon Ford has become Macready's right hand man ("Of this I must be sure—there's no woman anywhere," Macready tells Ford before hiring him) at his gambling club and the two settle into a workable relationship until Macready goes away on a business trip and returns with La Hayworth as his wife. The tracking shot in on Ford's startled and hurt expression and his stammered response to Macready's "surprise" of having a woman living in his house—"That's quite a su . . . a surprise"—leaves absolutely no room for doubt about the implications. The script tries to play it safe by giving Ford and Hayworth a "past," and that would be fine, but for one thing: Ford's reaction to this news comes before he sees the woman!

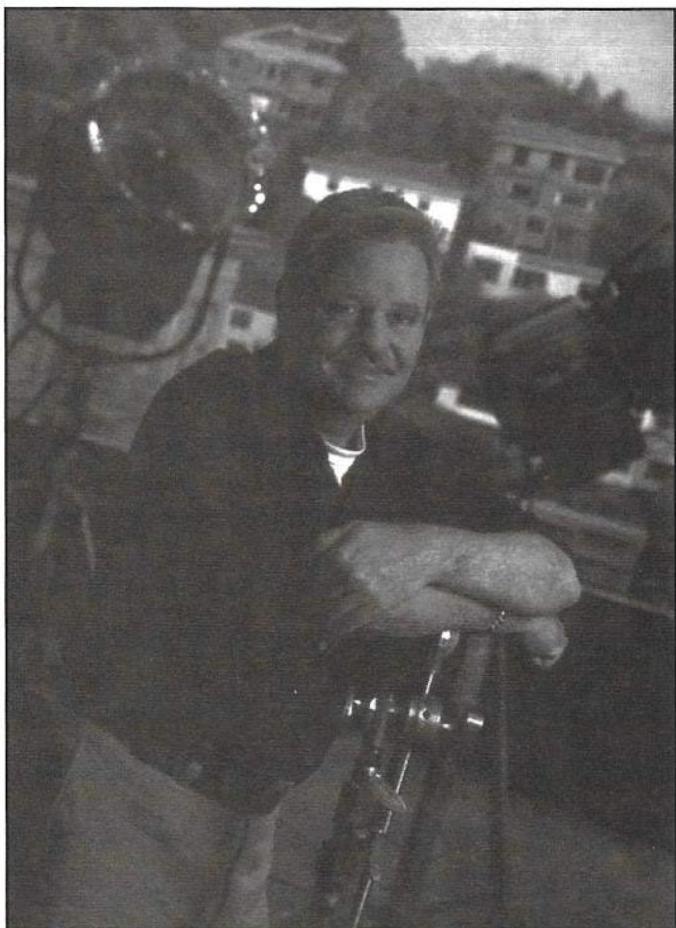
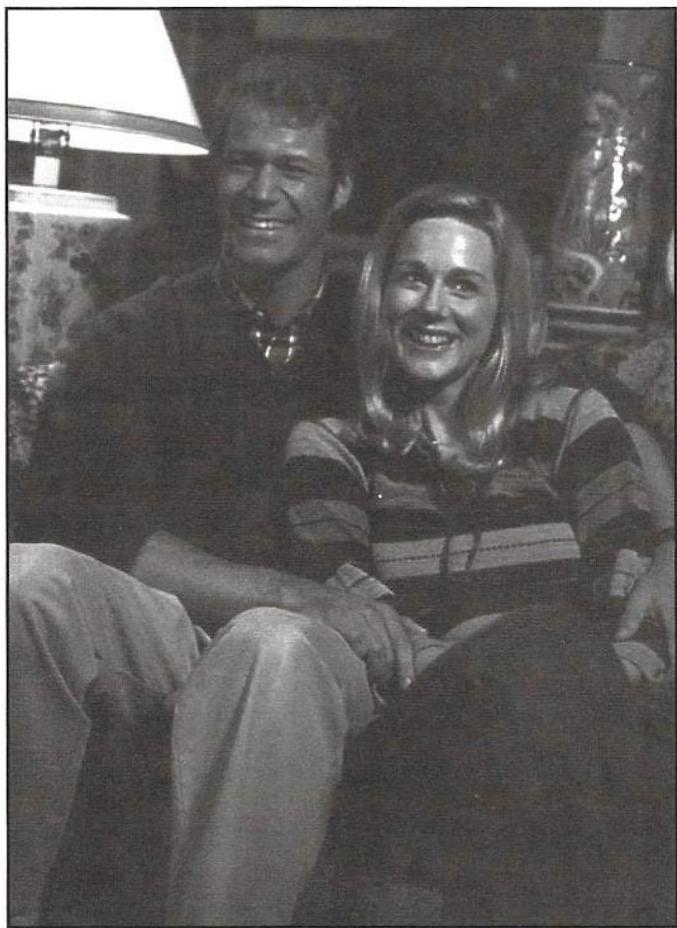
Despite the subsequent trappings of melodrama and shady dealings with ex-Nazis and the expected Ford/Hayworth romance, GILDA never really changes. It remains pretty much the film it starts out to be—the story of the relationship between two men. All the scenes involving them ring true, while the scenes involving Hayworth come across as Harry Cohn showcase items. Vidor's own attentions seem to be focused on the men, too. Apart from the introductory shot of Hayworth, many of her scenes—even her musical numbers—seem rather tossed off with little interest in how they are presented. At his best in the film, Vidor manages to create a *noir* with the visual and symbolic sense of a Sternberg (the masked ball is a dazzler that compares favorably with the carnival in Sternberg's 1935 THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN), which is perhaps just the right tone to take with a film about obsessions—that those obsessions are not quite the expected ones is another matter altogether.

—Ken Hanke

*To be Continued . . .*



NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES (1948)



LEFT: Colin Ferguson and Laura Linney are Burke Andrew and Mary Ann Singleton are Gregory Peck and Ingrid Bergman in MORE TALES OF THE CITY. RIGHT: Author Armistead Maupin.

## SPELLBOUND IN SAN FRANCISCO

*Continued from page 68*

dancer, and one of them said, 'It's just a body. What's all the fuss about?' The other one looked at her and smirked and said, 'So why'd you go get your glasses?'

Not all of *MORE TALES*' allusions derive from Hitchcock, Maupin pointed out. "It's a cultural grab bag, really, and some of it actually was unconscious. When I named Mona's mother Betty Ramsey, in some corner of my mind I must have realized that she was Lucy Ricardo's neighbor in Connecticut. And the anagram was completely inadvertent on my part. I named the landlady Anna Madrigal because I loved the name. I think it must have stuck in my head from the film *THE CHALK GARDEN*. The governess played by Deborah Kerr is named Miss Madrigal. I was also going for a 'Mrs. Miniver' sort of name. I loved the sort of music of that; it sounded right, and 'Anna' seemed to go with it. So I simply named her that. I had been writing the column in the newspaper for several months when someone wrote me and said, 'I know what Anna's secret is, because her name is an anagram.' I took one look at it and thought, 'Motherfucker, they're right!' And I built it right into the plot as if I'd intended it all along! That was the great advantage of writing a daily serial; you could swipe ideas from your readers."

Some references never made it into the final script, Maupin continued. "In the book, the *LOVE BOAT* mention was simply to the very first movie made for TV. There

wasn't a series. My concern was that we not look like we were trading on the series, and also we didn't know whether we'd have to make a deal with *THE LOVE BOAT*. There were a number of commercial considerations that came into play—clearances on names and things—which writers don't have to get at all. I can write a novel and include any product I want, but any product mentioned in the miniseries had to be cleared. Crisco, for instance, refused to let us put their name on Michael's T-shirt. They know very well what they're most famous for, but they simply didn't want to acknowledge it publicly. So I had to write a new joke about tools to convey the same idea."

What's next for the folks at Barbary Lane? According to Armistead Maupin, "Showtime has indicated that they'll proceed with the rest of the novels if they get the audience they hope to receive. But I'm not planning any more books in the series. My partner Terry says that one of these days, when I'm really broke, I'll have to write *Christmas at Barbary Lane*, and really exploit these characters. Or bring them back like Conan Doyle brought back Sherlock Holmes, and call it *Reichenbach Falls*. Actually, I seriously considered writing a novel called *Reichenbach Falls* at one time."

Meanwhile, faithful Tales followers have *MORE TALES OF THE CITY* to enjoy, and Maupin watchers even have a Hitchcockian cameo by their favorite author.

"You know, I'm the priest in the final episode," said the master of Barbary Lane, "but I wish you'd tell your readers that I'm thinner than that, now."



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In Brixton Road, this morning, a plain gold wedding ring found in the roadway between the White Hart Tavern and Holland Grove. Apply Dr. Watson, 221B, Baker Street, between eight and nine this evening.

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**WHO KILLED TEDDY BEAR?** Photos, press book, production information. Richard Valley, PO Box 604, Glen Rock, NJ 07452.



### BOOK ENDS

*Continued from page 65*

"Ligeia" (1838), which of course has spawned its own movie versions.

One can only hope that, sooner rather than later, all of Lovecraft's fiction will be accorded the same wonderful treatment as it receives in this book!

—Robert M. Price

### SEEMS LIKE OLD CRIMES

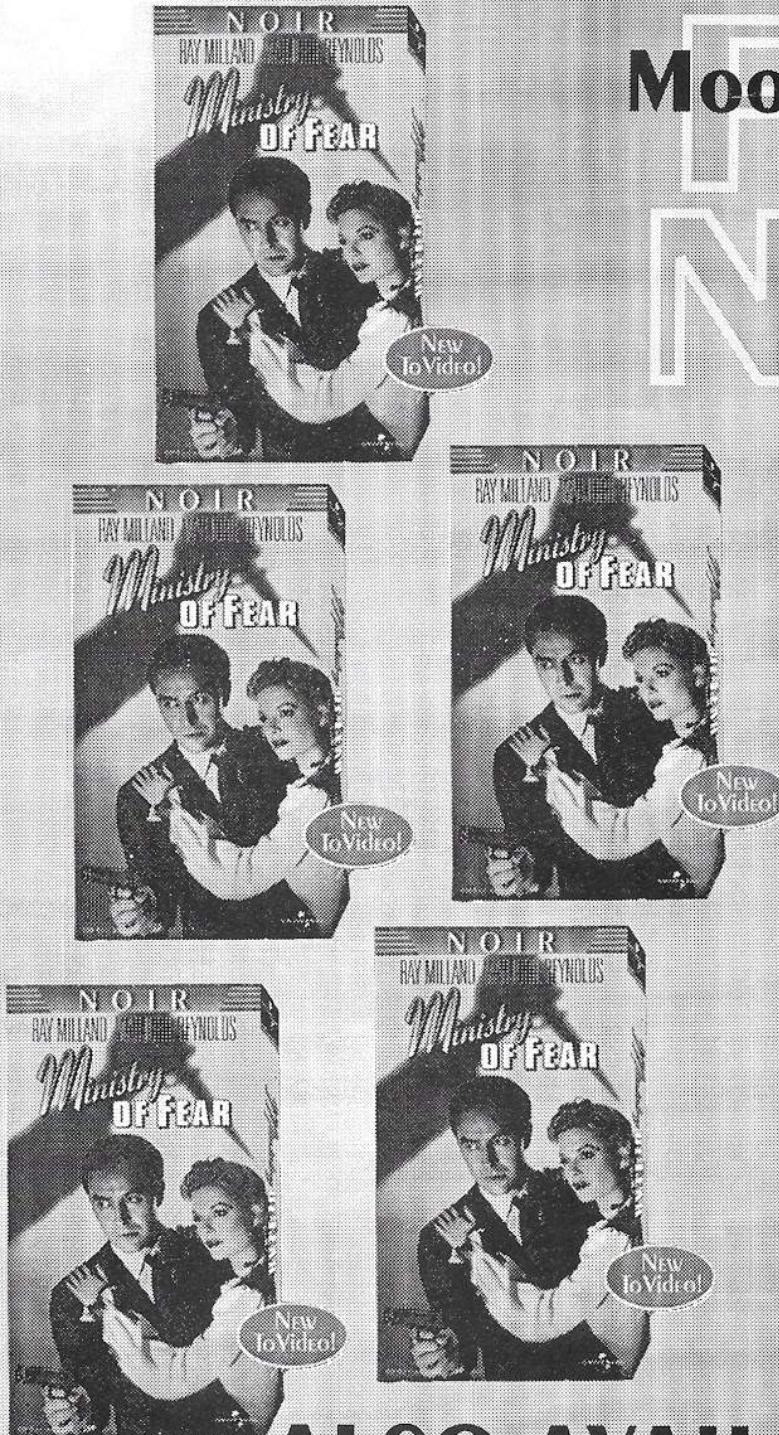
*Continued from page 67*

This is why Macdonald came closer than anyone—past or present—in transcending the genre. If he failed, and he almost certainly did, it was a noble, almost Quixotic failure that was more a reflection of the genre's limitations than his ability. In the end, a mystery novel must follow a formula that puts a straitjacket on even the most talented writer. The plot is not a means for developing the novel, as it is in the hands of a Hemingway or a James, but the end itself. If you don't solve the mystery, you don't have a novel.

It's true that Macdonald was not as brilliant a stylist as Chandler or as visionary a writer as Hammett. It's also true that his plots (especially in the early novels) could be jumbled messes with clichés for every occasion, and that they tended to a certain sameness after a while—angst-ridden children, angst-ridden parents, angst-ridden families. But it's also true that he was able to see the American heart of darkness in a way no one else could, and that's a perspective we could use now.



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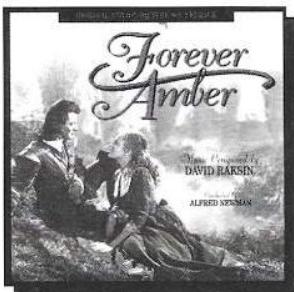


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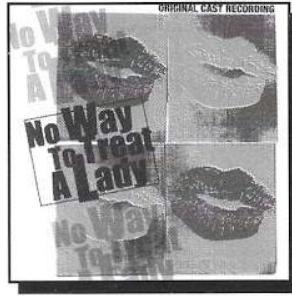
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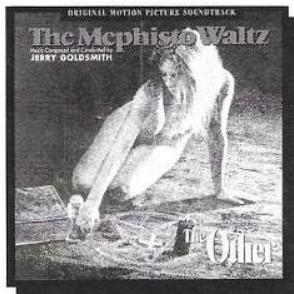


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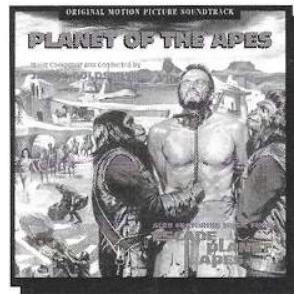
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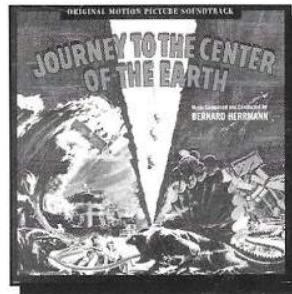
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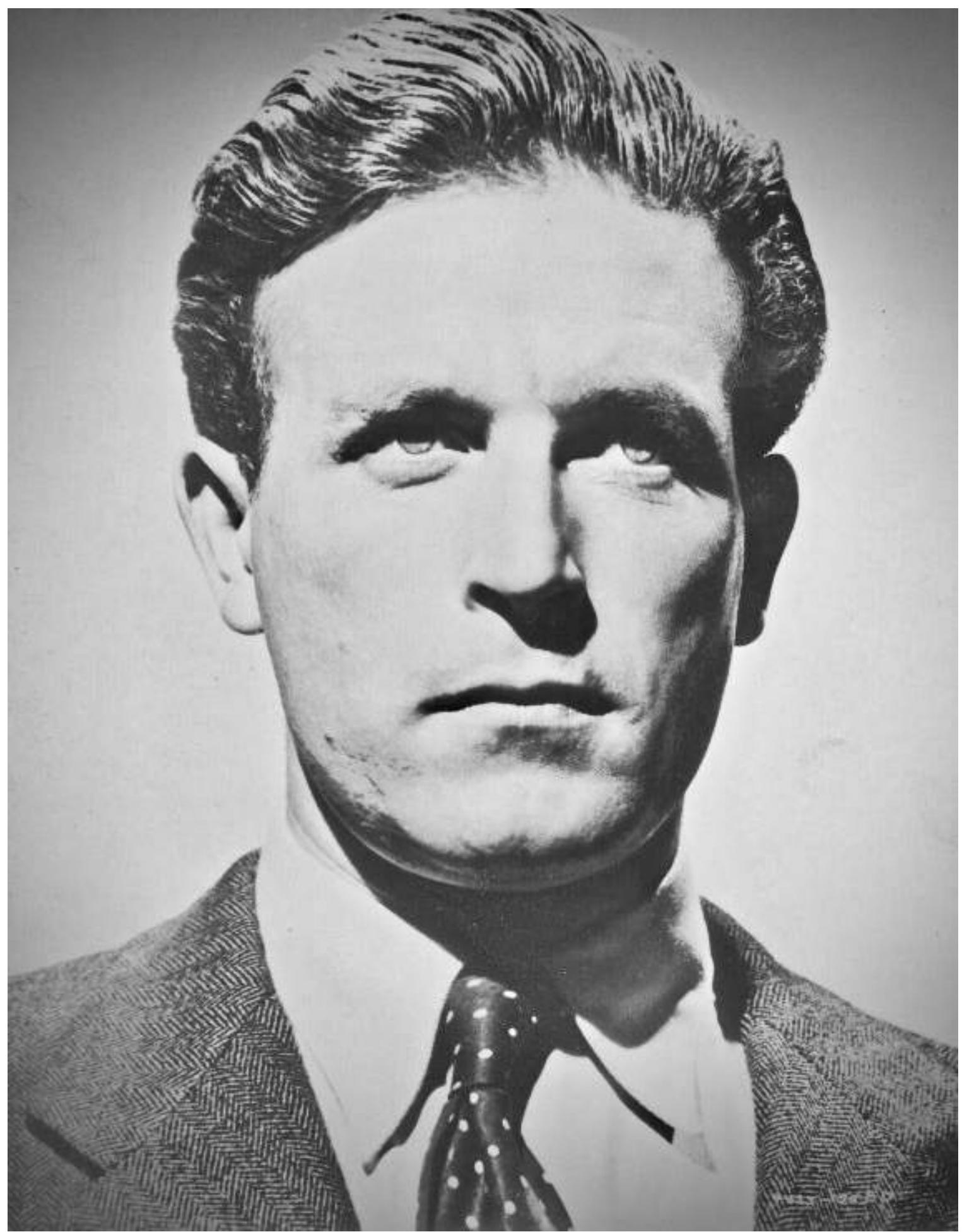
















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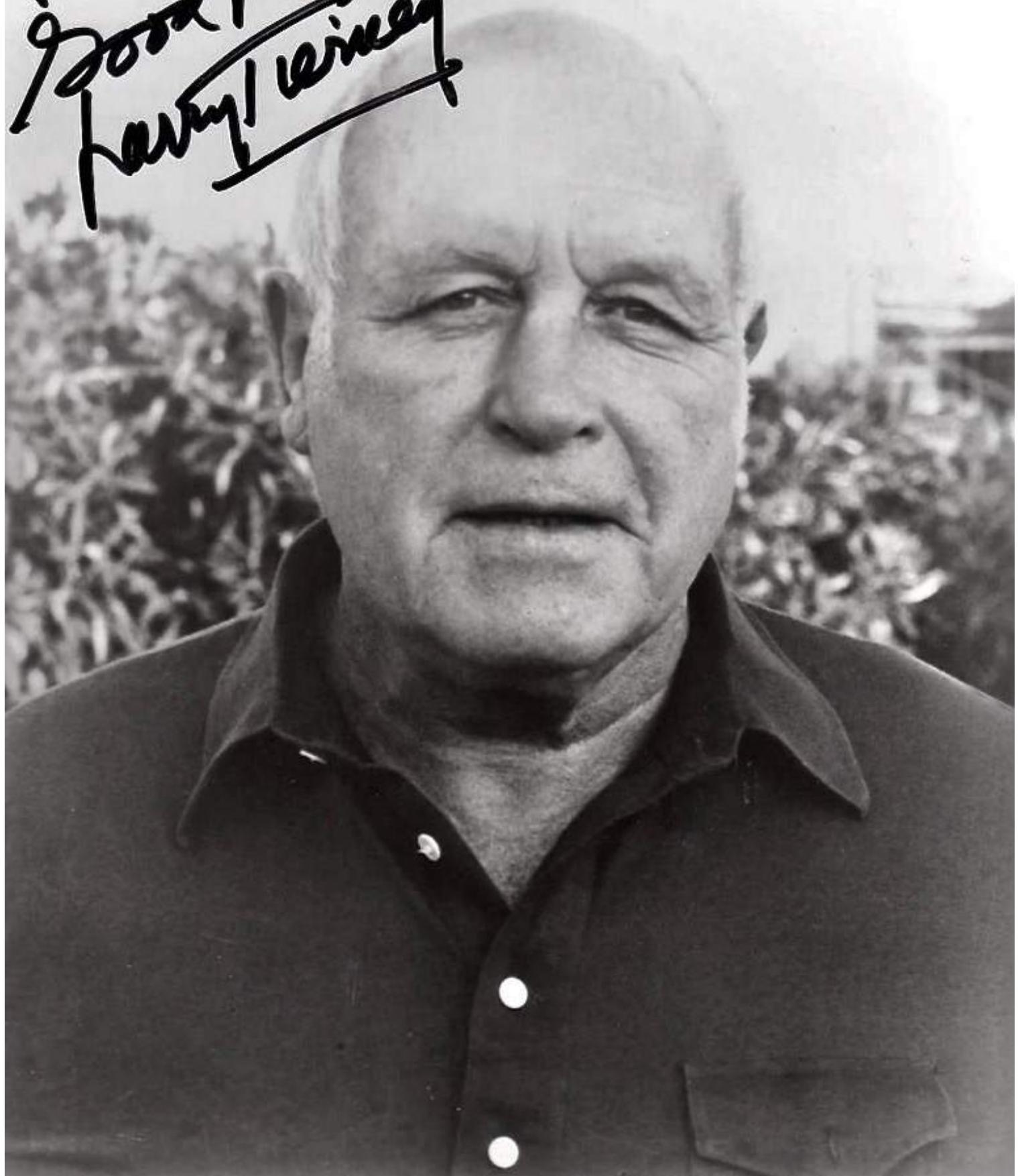






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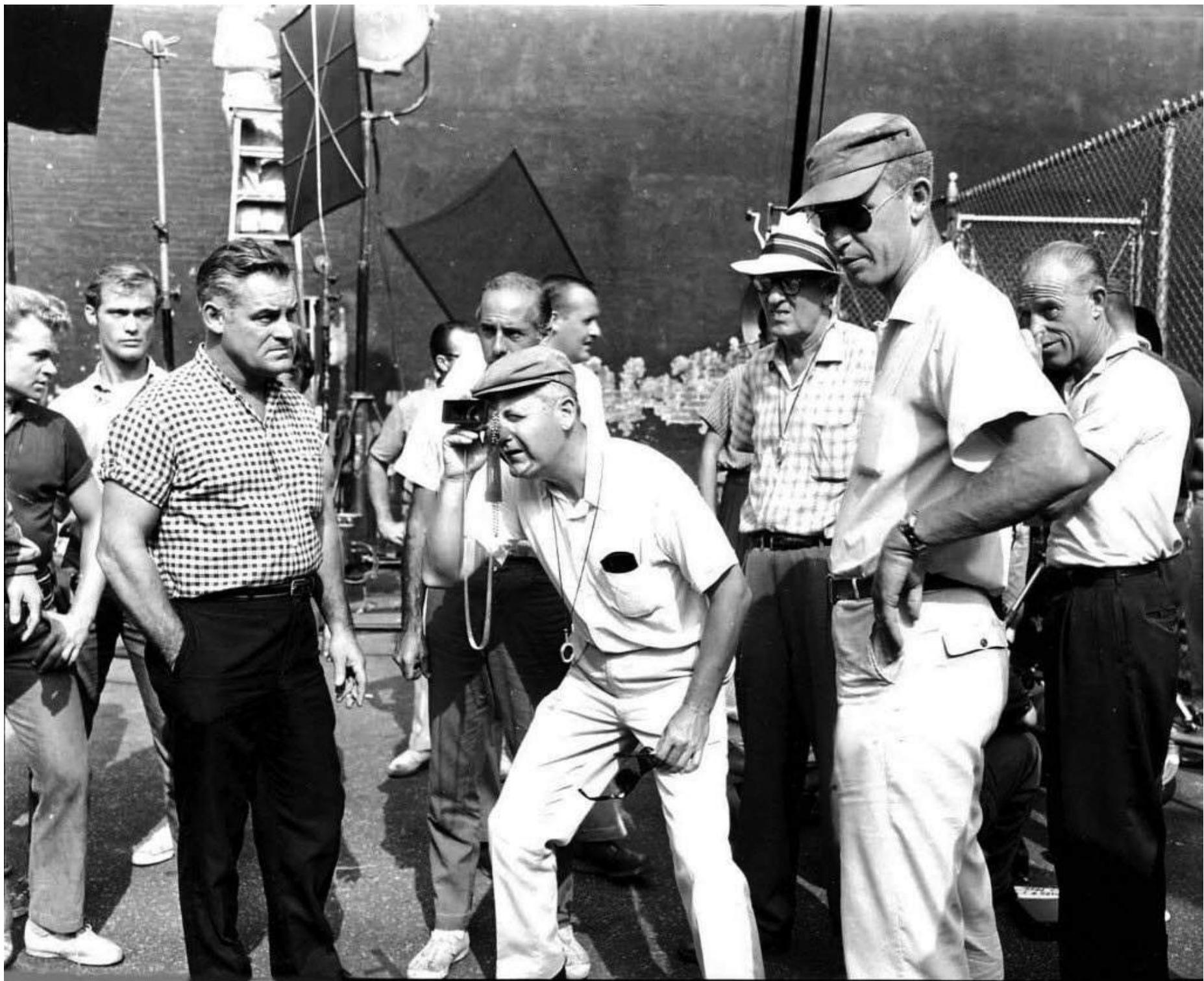




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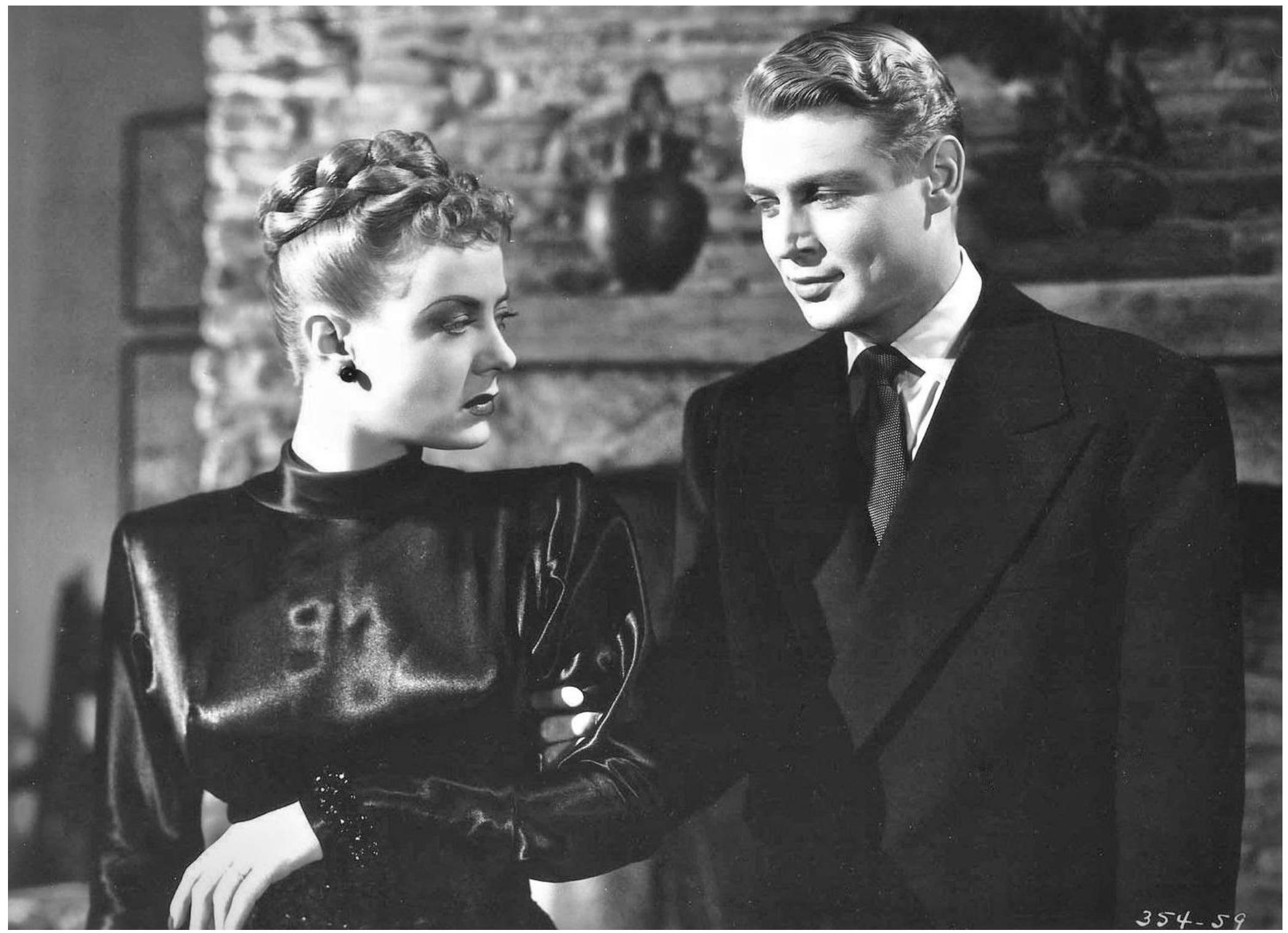








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